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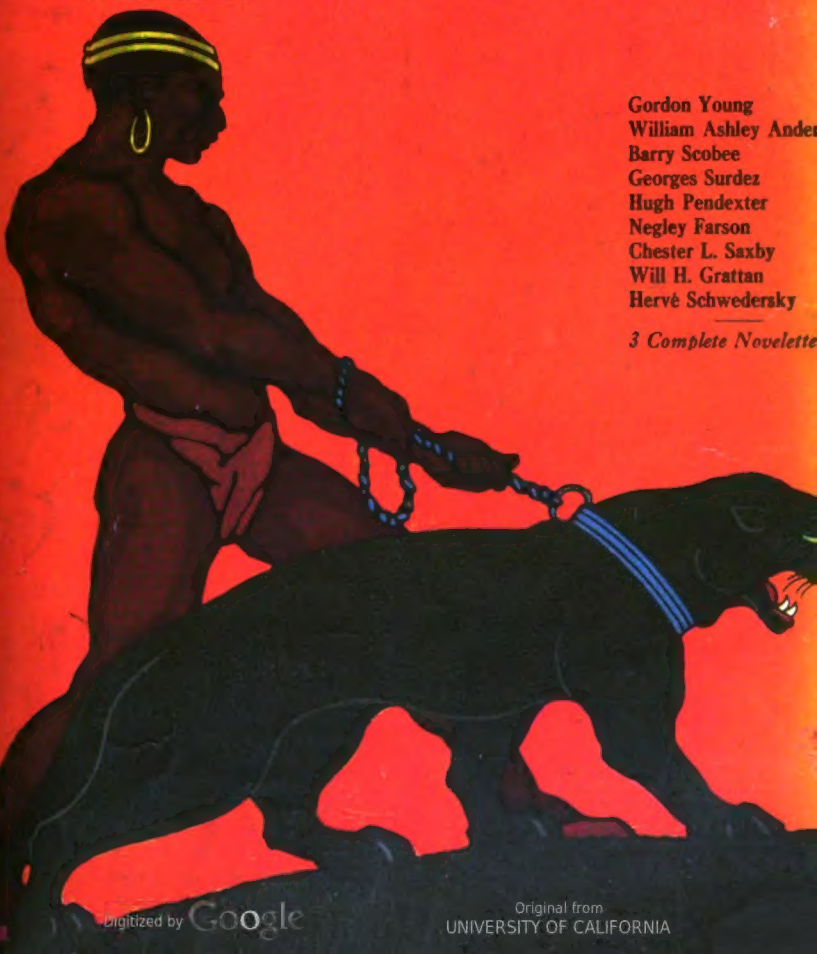

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3 Complete Novelette

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MAY 30 1923 VOL. XL. No 6

Published Three Times a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

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Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.

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Nahi—a derelict tackles a delicate job.

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Lost Trails . . . . . .

Old Songs That Men Have Sung . . . . . .

The Trail Ahead . . . . . .

Headings . . . . . **John R. Ha**

Cover Design . . . . . **H. O. Ha**

Four Complete Novelettes

WHEN *Murvey*, red-eyed with hate, drove the ***Buwalla*** **into** ***Kingdon's*** **wharf he** laughed and said he'd pay the damages—only he didn't know just what the damages were going to be. That was for *Samuel* to tell him—*Samuel* with a scar on his cheek, and a deeper scar in his heart. "BAD BUSINESS," **a novelette of** the Niger Delta, by Robert Simpson, complete in the next issue.

THE strangest expedition that ever men undertook. Through Russia searching for "the Sacred Stone;" where Cossacks and Chinese intrigue together, and every mile holds an unknown danger. "THE SEAL OF JENGHIS KHAN," a complete novelette by H. Bedford-Jones in the next issue.

CAPTAIN JERRY HACKBUTT, sailing out of the port of New Bedford in search of oil, matches Yankee wits against hurricanes, savages and loss of cargo in the southern seas. But when he meets up with yellow pirates he waggles his lantern jaws and concocts the saltiest scheme of all. "THE JOSS ON THE FO'CSLE," by J. H. Greene, is a novelette complete in the next issue.

SAN FRANCISCO'S colorful population in 1855. *Judge Alger Spotten*, political boss of the town; his feud with *Robert Cary*, and the reasons that prompted *William Walker* to offer *Cary* a place in his great filibustering expedition to Guatemala. "THE FIFTY-SIXTH IMMORTAL," a complete novelette by Eugene Cunningham in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

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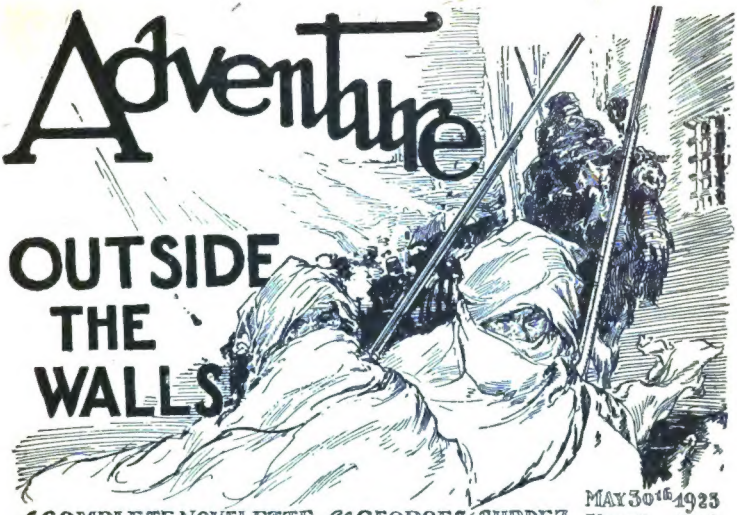

OUTSIDE THE WALLS

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE by GEORGES SURDEZ

MAY 30th 1923 VOL XL NO 6

Author of "Hell's Half-Way House," "The Angel-Maker," etc.

I

HUNG on the intense blue of the pasteled sky, dimming the stars, the crescent moon beams down upon the folds of sand enclosing the tiny town. The whine of the *Gosba*, the Arab's flute, comes as a plaintive cry of the desert, the voicing of the loneliness of the sand wastes. Mingling with the clear notes rises the rumbling of the tambourines, as if exhaled from the iron-barred windows of the lime-plastered houses.

From the Roumis' barracks comes the brazen call of a bugle, long, soft, echoing.

The fires go out one by one, and the night appears to darken. Each star is thrown into glowing relief. The moon seems to liquify in a splendid silver stream that replaces the ruddy glow of men's fires with the soft, warm radiance of molten metal. From the enveloping Sahara blows a hot wind, bringing the faint fragrance of spice and oil—the passion of free riders.

SILKEN pajamas, the short cropped hair of a soft pelt beneath his feet, the opium-like taste of the thin cigarets, filled Captain Duflos with vague longings, with the keen desire for new, untasted pleasures, faint, yet precise, as real, as elusive as the country about him—pleasures unknown to his race, to his creed, mystical gratifications materialized from the Seventh Heaven, visited by the Prophet, and promised to the Faithful.

Through the ogival window, he could see the little town of Ahamar, spreading down the gentle slope to the palm-trees by the water-hole. The lone, slim minaret rose like a pointing finger in the rays of the moon. He remembered how, in the daytime, the white walls and tower seemed to hold captive the blue shadows of sunshine.

However, there was work to be done.

He moved across the carpet to his worktable. Papers, more papers. The existence of a captain in an outpost is not a sinecure. Reports to be drawn, information on the native populations to be compiled for headquarters in Algiers, blank forms to be filled

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out, orders for supplies. And that cursed Borel affair to be studied——

He picked up the folder— "Borel—Private—Trial," on the cover.

Private Borel, who was he? Ah, yes, that tall, blond young fellow, who had arrived a few weeks ago. He had not been long in getting into troubles, that one! He read the document, the list of charges, then shrugged. A few words, a hasty gesture, and now a man's future hung in the balance.

He would get up in the morning, read the report carefully. Why should he work tonight when he could indulge in quiet reverie by the window? During the day he was the officer, the man in uniform, inflexible, stern, just. At night, he could be himself an individual with aspirations, impulses.

He would settle the affair in a few words, have Borel reinstated into his company. He liked men of spirit. Borel had been more or less justified in striking the sergeant. A tempest in a teapot, a silly military rule infringed. He opened a drawer and slid the report within.

He breathed a sigh of relief as the evidence of his profession disappeared from view. The army, with its iron-clad regulations, its constant demands! Well, he would serve loyally while on duty, work for the army's interest, nurse his men, attend to their welfare. But let no one disturb him outside! He would not go to the *Cercle*, where the other officers gathered to talk shop—the ultimate carrying capacity of a well-fed four-year-old camel, the eternal possibility of an outbreak, the depredations of the Tuaregs in the In Renel region.

Fine to have a home of one's own away from the barracks, to have long conferences with one's soul.

His orderly, who occupied the room below, near the entrance door, entered softly, saluted. He was a cheerful fellow, but too military, Captain Duflos thought. He must get rid of him and hire a native servant, who would not be forever saluting, and expecting orders barked out as on the parade-ground.

"Well?" Duflos inquired.

"Captain d'Arcy to see you, sir."

"Captain d'Arcy! Tell him I am not in——"

What would come next if he allowed himself to be disturbed late at night? He left the other officers alone. What did this visit mean? D'Arcy, the aged ass, probably came to inform him that he was mistaken in his contention that artillery is the supreme factor in modern warfare.

"I have already told him you are in," the orderly replied.

Even his own man was in conspiracy to disturb him tonight. He sighed, and nodded.

"Bring him in."

"He said it was very important—" the man apologized.

"Never mind. Bring him in!"

A few seconds later, d'Arcy arrived. A short, dapper little man with sallow cheeks, a wisp of hair on his chin, and a habit of gesturing profusely with his slim hands; he should have been, in Duflos' opinion, a notary instead of an army man.

"I beg your pardon for disturbing you, Duflos," he apologized.

"Don't worry, I'm used to it," Duflos remarked caustically, bringing a chair close. "Sit down."

D'Arcy sat. Duflos offered him a cigaret, poured out a glass of wine. Now that there was no help for it, he could at least be hospitable. He did not speak, but waited for the other to state the object of his visit.

"I suppose you know that I am chosen to defend Borel," d'Arcy began.

Borel again! He opened the drawer regretfully, shuffling the leaves absentmindedly.

"You want my testimony?" he demanded, still playing with the folder.

"More than that," d'Arcy went on. "That is why I came to see you personally."

"Ah!"

D'Arcy moistened his lips.

"The poor —— had every reason to strike. Sergeant Danchis is a mean-tempered brute, and goaded him. There is little likelihood that Borel will be sentenced. The prosecuting attorney has told me that he will not push the case hard. But, to cinch the matter, we need you——"

"At your service——"

"I am going to call upon you to testify in his favor. I don't mean to say anything you don't think, just a few words as to your personal opinion of the case. We know you are with us, because you have already punished Danchis for his part in the affair."

"I did. Discipline had been infringed——"

"Quite right. Well, in the morning, will you see what you can do to help us?"

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"I'll give my opinion on the case."

D'Arcy changed the subject and, as Duflos had expected, entered upon a lengthy dissertation on tactics. He did not leave until past midnight. His presence had broken the charm. Duflos' evening had been ruined. He escorted his unwelcome guest to the stairs, came back to the table, and stared at the cover of the folder.

He had been asked for his opinion, to give it publicly.

His military personality had been appealed to, his military personality should answer. And the manner in which he would answer would prevent the recurrence of visits of the kind he had received tonight. He lived away from the officers' section to avoid being disturbed. Now was the occasion to teach them all a lesson. Fatuous, long-eared d'Arcy, with his pompous ways and calm expectancy that everything should be done as he suggested!

Private Borel——

Did he not have two hundred privates under his command, not to mention a lieutenant, some sergeants and corporals? Privates were always getting into trouble and, having once shown leniency, the personal touch would be appealed to in every instance. It would start with rather serious matters, such as tonight, and keep on, until he might be called in the middle of the night to find a belt-buckle lost by private number four, of the first dormitory, during drill!

He lighted a cigaret, opened a book. Private Borel's face came between his eyes and the pages. Private Borel was still there, with his trouble, his trial.

Finally, Captain Duflos turned down the lamp, went to bed.

"Well, tomorrow, we shall attend to you, Private Borel——"

THE trial of Private Borel boasted of three judges, a colonel and two captains.

They sat behind a huge oak desk, and seemed utterly bored by the proceedings. Captain d'Arcy sat at Borel's side, listening to the harangue of the prosecuting attorney, an officer from the Spahis Regiment. Behind them were gathered a crowd of spectators, shuffling, coughing, humming like a beehive. Out of the windows, that rose nearly to the yellowed ceiling, could be seen the white-washed walls of the houses on the other side of the street.

Over the colonel's head stood a bust of the woman that allegorically represents the French Republic. Beneath, dusty flags were festooned. Private Borel thought he could perceive a faint smile on the marble lips. Yes, the irony was great. He had enlisted to serve France, and France was judging him to find whether he was worthy of serving!

The men guarding him, privates from his own regiment, stood silently on either side of the bench, and from time to time, the butt of a rifle resounded sharply against the parquet as one of them shifted position. He knew these men, had met them in the cafés about the place. Yet now they did not smile back when he looked at them.

"It's all right," d'Arcy whispered. "You'll be free in twenty minutes."

"But if I am sentenced," Borel protested.

"Don't worry," the captain insisted.

But Paul Borel was not wholly at ease.

He had heard of the Light Infantry of Africa, the "Bataillons d'Afrique," called for short the "Bat' d'Af'."

Military service in France is compulsory. The son of the rich man and the street-cleaner are both called to join the colors at the age of twenty-one. Young men who have, previous to the call, served a jail sentence, are not allowed to enter into the same regiments as their fellows who have stayed in the straight and narrow path. They are incorporated into the Bat' d'Af., where they serve their three years. They are employed in public works requiring manual labor, particularly in road-building. In addition, they have the usual infantry drills. The convicts and worst cases are sent into the disciplinary companies, where the weak soon die, and the strong emerge stronger physically, but having lost in mental stamina.

If a private or non-commissioned officer in the garrison-towns of France or Algeria is guilty of a grave breach of discipline, he is sent into these battalions.

"You'll be all right," d'Arcy continued to assure him. "Just listen——"

The prosecuting attorney had launched out upon his concluding speech:

"However, gentlemen, I recommend leniency. In so doing, I step outside my duties, but from the general sympathy felt for the accused, it is evident that justice should be tempered with mercy."

He sat down. There was loud applause

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from the spectators. The sentries circulated, and demanded silence. The colonel presiding looked displeased at the unnecessary manifestation. He rapped sharply on the desk.

"When you please, Captain d'Arcy," he said.

Captain d'Arcy rose and stepped before the desk. His fox-like nose thrust defiantly into the air, he awaited silence. Then, turning to the judges, cleared his throat.

"Gentlemen—" Then as though to make impressive his address, he repeated:

"Gentlemen, when a prosecuting attorney departs from his appointed duties to advise leniency, there is little need for a lawyer to speak. I shall merely resume the facts of the case. My client, Paul Borel, enlisted before his time in the army. He is the son of wealthy parents, and could have been assigned to a home garrison. Did he await the call? No. Fired with the desire to emulate his comrades of the Colonial Army, who have wrested from barbarism an empire, he asked to come here. This speaks of good spirit——

"On some trivial excuse, Sergeant Danchis spoke to him roughly, calling him by a name not used in polite circles. Borel forgot his uniform, his station as a private, and resented the insult with a blow. We would have done the same at his age. The blow bruised the sergeant's cheek a trifle. Now, if you carry out the letter of the law, you can condemn this man. The act of a second paid for by years of hell—" d'Arcy paused.

"You know what the 'Bataillons d'Afrique" do to a man!'

The colonel interrupted—

"There is no need to step outside the case, and make disparaging remarks about any branch of the army."

"Quite right," d'Arcy bowed. "But you can not deny that no matter how strong the moral fiber, five years of association with criminals, especially during the early twenties, will destroy a sense of honor, and innate decency. Expose a man to disease germs and he contracts the disease. Crime is a disease. Be careful, gentlemen——"

There was confusion among the spectators, scattered applause quickly quelled by the colonel's frown.

"You have in your hands the power to give France another criminal. On the other hand you can give her a great soldier. Fired by the spirit that drove him into the Colonial Army, well-educated, intelligent Borel has a career before him. We are going back to the great men of the French Revolution, Hoche, Marceau, Angereau, Massena, there are cases to prove that this is not an impossibility," d'Arcy smiled. "The colonel presiding for instance——

The colonel broke in:

"Captain d'Arcy, I am well aware of the beginning. That should have no bearing on the matter. Had I been a noble you would have expected me to be partial. As a soldier, risen from the ranks my attitude can not be different. He will be judged on the facts of the case, on appeals to sympathy, or his problem to rise to fame."

D'Arcy was too intelligent to try to make up his error.

Borel felt hopeful in spite of the incident. The crowd was for him and the crowd alone might influence the judges. He was sorry, however, that d'Arcy had not curtailed his speech a few sentences sooner. The colonel might take this occasion to prove himself an officer altogether estranged from his early days as a private. On the other hand he might defy the opinion of others, and stand up for the private. The two captains would take their cue from him as to their decision.

D'Arcy resumed, though with a trifle less assurance.

"Then, of course, colonel, you will show the same spirit that enabled you to rise, the spirit of the army. You will act for the best interest of France, which is to give her back a soldier, a devoted son."

Again, the crowd murmured approval.

"In any case, Captain Duflos will speak. Should he be willing to overlook the offense, take Borel back into his company, will you allow him?"

The colonel nodded. Perhaps he was glad that the embarrassing decision had been taken out of his hands.

"I'll allow Captain Duflos to complete my case," d'Arcy concluded, and turning to Borel, sat by his side. "Don't worry," he reiterated, "Duflos will pull you out. I saw him yesterday. You're as good as free."

"Captain Duflos," the usher called.

Duflos, who had been standing in the back of the room, made his way through the crowd, stepped into the open space before the judges, saluted. All admired his uni-

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.re, the energetic bronzed face, the clear e eyes that look straight at one, piercing, rless, the well-fitting uniform with the oon of his decoration standing out nson against the dark blue.

The dreamer was gone. Captain Duflos s right—when on duty he was the typical dier. All noticed that he wore dress- ves, as if on a state occasion.

Borel knew his captain by sight and repu- ion. A fine man in appearance, a just an in actions. He had never been heard speak loudly. His decisions, were stated a cold, level tone. He was kind. No mpany received more care, better quar- rs, better food. He was inflexible on n-commissioned officers who abused their wers. Acquittal, thought Borel, was a rtainty. Had not Duflos immediately t Sergeant Danchis under arrest, in- cted two weeks confinement to barracks? rivate Borel sat back, sighed with relief. es, he would be free soon.

"Captain Duflos," the colonel said, in his eep sonorous voice. "The decision rests pon you. Are you willing to take this an back into your company?"

"Colonel, I am impressed with the im- ortance of the decision I am asked to nake. Will you permit me to present first . few words in explanation?"

"Certainly, captain, certainly," the olonel replied, apparently in better humor.

"I was approached yesterday by the lefense, asked to give my opinion. My opinion as a private citizen is that Borel should be reinstated and forgiven." Duflos tone was, as usual, level, monotonous.

There came shouts from the back of the room and loud hand-clapping. D'Arcy patted Borel on the back, as if saying—

"See, was I not right?"

"Then you will take him back?" the colonel asked.

"I gave my opinion as a private citizen, colonel. Now, I shall speak as an officer—if I may be permitted the digression."

"Talkative—may spoil his effect," d'Arcy muttered to his client.

Borel nodded. Yes, D'Arcy had almost ruined the case by too great fluency, and Captain Duflos was about to do the same.

"The backbone of the army is discipline," Duflos resumed. There is no army without discipline. And the army must be whole and solid through all its component parts. The corps must be a unit. The division a unit, the regiment a unit, and so on, down to the squad. To keep the unit, every man, from general to private must be subject to rules. The army is the defense of the country. He who breaks its rules attacks his country. If there be excuses for infractions to the rules, the whole scheme falls down. A man must realize that, no matter the provocation, if he breaks a rule he will be punished. And not lightly—but to the full extent. I carried out this principle in the Danchis-Borel affair. Danchis broke the rule: 'A superior must not use abusive language to an inferior.' I punished him to the limit—fifteen days confinement to barracks. Private Borel broke another rule— 'An inferior must not strike a superior.' Sergeant Danchis believed himself justified in his language, Private Borel equally so in his act. But their reasons do not enter into the question. An officer should see merely the infraction. His business is not to inquire into motives, but to punish acts."

"So you refuse to admit him into your company?" the colonel asked.

"I refuse," Duflos said calmly.

Borel felt as a drowning man who, after reaching for a saving plank, sees it float beyond his reach. D'Arcy was cursing under his breath.

"Do you advise his acquittal?" the colonel asked.

Borel looked up hopefully. There was still a chance. Duflos' unshakable arguments had impressed the judges, but the colonel's question showed a willingness to consider mercy. What matter the company, as long as he was not sent to the Bat' d'Af?

"I have given the decision demanded; I am not the judge," Duflos replied.

"Nevertheless," the colonel went on gently, "you may have been influenced by the wish to keep a possible source of trouble away from your company. We all understand that there would be a certain enmity between Sergeant Danchis and Private Borel, and that it would be better, on second thought, to keep them apart. Is that your idea?"

"Had it been, I would have expressed it," Duflos said.

The colonel consulted with the two captains, coughed, tapped nervously on the desk-top.

"Captain, we must have a straight answer from you. Did you speak as

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captain of your particular company, or in general?"

The colonel paused, embarrassed. He knew that it was not right to bring in the opinion of an outsider, and yet, unless he obtained the formal admission of private interest, his duty was clear.

"Did you speak personally, or from principle?"

"It is a principle," Duflos replied. "I advise that Private Borel be sent to the 'Bataillon d'Afrique' for the full term foreseen as punishment for offenses of the kind."

"Thank you."

Duflos saluted and left the room. The spectators parted before him silently. There was no protest. He had been asked for his opinion. He had given it. Many admired his frank stand. Many would have shirked the responsibility and evaded the issue.

D'Arcy leaped to his feet.

"Without contradicting Captain Duflos I can—I will—I—" he began.

But he could not go on. There was no issue. A thing was either right or wrong. As an officer he could find no flaw in Duflos' reasoning.

Borel clenched his hands until the knuckles showed white. He felt his case hopeless. D'Arcy was putting the finishing touches to his disgrace by his aimless blustering. That calm-faced captain—he might meet him again sometime, give him a chance to act up to his fine theories of discipline.

What was the use of it all, why obey honorable impulses? Why fight for one's country? Yes, the marble woman was laughing at him. France, he had wanted to serve. His services had been scorned, forgotten for a single gesture as impulsive as self-defense. Certain words seem to demand a blow for an answer. Could a man become a perfect machine, a cog in the grinding military scheme of things? It was impossible.

D'Arcy sat down, his face ashy white.

The judges were conferring, but not animatedly enough to indicate a disagreement.

The colonel finally gained his feet and solemnly announced—

"The court martial finds Private Borel guilty, and condemns him to the Bataillon d'Afrique for five years."

II

TWO weeks later, Private Borel, reporting to the First Battalion of African Light Infantry at Ain Safra, stood between two policemen, facing a casual young officer at the desk.

The lieutenant suddenly started, looked up.

"Borel?" he questioned.

"Yes, sir."

"Heard of you, young man. Remember, now, no striking sergeants in this outfit, or it will mean Biribi for you."

Biribi, nickname of the disciplinary company. Stone-breaking on the high roads, the filthiest work to be found around the cities of the hinterland!

"They're making your case a precedent," the young officer went on. "Captain Duflos certainly presented things. Discipline at all costs. Created quite a stir, you did. Look at this——"

He handed Borel a circular letter sent out by the commanding general. His name was mentioned several times in the report: Duflos' speech had made quite an impression on the spectators. The question was now the object of controversy in the Algiers newspapers.

"Which means that discipline everywhere will have to tighten up. We have been allowing sentimentality—" The lieutenant broke into a grin. "Those are not my words—read the circular!"

Borel, seeing the other's evident amusement, made bold to answer.

"I'm as sorry over the affair as you are, sir——"

No sooner were the words spoken then he realized that he, as Duflos and d'Arcy, had spoken out of his turn. The officer's face darkened with quick passion.

"Oh—I see!" he said sharply. "You're a humorist, eh? We'll teach you to see things in a less comical light, here. You and your Duflos—a fine mess you've started! The colonel is down on us to attend to our duties, we are down on the sergeants. Wait until they find out who you are."

He rang the call bell on his desk and called out, loudly—

"Sergeant Criquet!"

Sergeant Criquet entered. He was a tall man, heavy-set, with a bronzed face that gave the impression of having been carved out of wood. Long mustaches drooped,

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from beneath a potato-like nose, seemingly discouraged with the weather and conditions in general. Borel saw that Criquet was a man of quick temper, of patient and persistent hatred. Unless he could win his esteem, life would be unbearable. The only thing to do was to stand at attention and look meek.

"This is Private Borel," the lieutenant began. "You've heard of him?"

"Yes, sir."

"He will need personal attention as he has pretentions of humor, and, as we know, is quick with a blow. Needless to say, I recommend him to you."

The sergeant saluted, dismissed the two policemen with a snarling order. Turning to Borel, he inspected him from head to foot. The impression was evidently not favorable. He was doubtless annoyed to find that the private topped him by a full inch.

"Come with me, my bird!" he snapped out.

Borel pivoted faultlessly and followed him out. Reasoned out calmly, without prejudice, they had good reason to be angered. It was no light thing to tighten up the rules, in a punishment barrack, which at best were severe, rigorous.

Criquet was sullenly silent. From time to time he peered back at his charge, from beneath bushy eyebrows of the same colorless sandy hue as the despondent mustaches. He seemed to be muttering to himself, however, and Borel saw no good ahead.

They crossed the courtyard where the noon sun blazed pitilessly. Immense waves of light fluctuated from the dazzling white-washed walls of the barracks. The sky overhead was of the intense metallic hue that seems to ooze heat. The two approached a building in the corner, a dormitory, or so Borel surmised. From within came the uproar of singing, quarreling and tin dishes being pushed about.

Criquet shoved open the door and stood impressively in the opening.

"Attention!" he shouted.

As by magic, things quieted down. The men, partly undressed, had evidently been enjoying the noon rest. Their pale faces, to Borel's imagination, conveyed the furtive impression of prison walls. Even the glowing African sun had not the power to wipe out completely the livid traces left by the sunless life of the detention houses.

"Private Borel—to take bunk with Private Desmard," Criquet announced. "Desmard, let me see you!"

Desmard stepped forward. He was a little fellow, perhaps five three in height, slight, anemic. His eyes did not look at one squarely but hovered about as if in search of an unattainable resting-place. He saluted, holding himself rigidly at attention.

"Take him to his bunk."

Desmard beckoned to Borel, and went to one of the cots, on which two men were supposed to sleep. At the head of the bed, on a plank, stood the little fellow's knapsack, his belongings. He indicated the free part of the plank.

"Your dresser," he said briefly.

Less than one-third of the space was free. Each man was entitled to half. Borel had learned in his brief military career, never to be shy. He knew that immediate self-assurance was the only method to pursue. He slid the other's knapsack to the half-way mark, heedless of the falling of objects from the opposite end.

Desmard picked up his boxes, brushes and other small articles without a word, but his lips twitched with helpless rage.

Criquet, still at the door, now spoke:

"Private Borel is the interesting young man who has occasioned the new regulations. I hope you'll thank him properly."

And Borel was left to face his thirty-nine new comrades.

There was a long silence. He pretended to be unaware of the interest he excited. Finally, a burly, stocky fellow detached himself from the staring crowd and came forward.

Clean-shaven, flat-faced, his sloping brow receded until hidden in a tangle of short-cropped black hair. His eyes, shifting in their orbits, lurked like wild beasts. He smoked a cigaret depending from his lower lip, Apache fashion. Borel immediately listed him as a product of the Parisian underworld. There was no mistaking the accent when he spoke.

"I'm the head here," the man stated. "Do you admit that?"

Borel straightened up, smiled.

"Yes. Why shouldn't I?"

"Usually the big ones take a lot of convincing."

"I don't care for the honor."

Borel smiled again.

The former Apache turned to Desmard

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who was standing close by, watching with hostile eyes every move of Borel.

"Get out of here!" he said.

The little man slunk off some distance away, and the other sat on the cot familiarly.

"My name is Frog Head," introduced the aggressive fellow. "All here recognize me as leader. You didn't make no fuss. I won't bother you. After all, if you had chosen, you might have trimmed me. We're friends."

"Sure," agreed Borel, and he cordially grasped Frog Head's hand.

He glanced appraisingly about him. The others when they saw their recognized leader offer friendship, came forward to meet the newcomer.

"Now, let me tell you," harangued Frog Head, "that Borel is one of us. Life or Death, eh?"

"Agreed!"

Frog Head went on to explain. At best, life under the grouchy non-coms. was scarcely bearable. To protect themselves from informers and spies within their own ranks, they had formed a league. The man who, to obtain favor with a sergeant, talked and caused a member to be punished for doing anything outside of regulations, was himself punished by the league. This sort of free masonry was more powerful than it would appear. It was not strange for a man to be found some fine morning with a bayonet between his ribs—his own weapon.

Frog Head told his story, a series of exploits on Parisian Pavement, when the lights blink out late at night. The terror of the exterior boulevards rambled on until the bugle rang out for drill.

The men donned their uniforms hastily, took their knapsacks, and filed out, rifle in hand. Borel followed, was handed a rifle by the quartermaster sergeant, and took his place in line, with his section.

Criquet was in command, the chin-strap of his cap fastened beneath his heavy jaws, businesslike, ferocious.

He stood before the group, gave a general lecture on all subjects concerning the various phases of a soldier's life. Having expounded his theory, he ordered—

"Carry arms!"

All carried arms.

"Ground arms!"

These commands were repeated until the rifle seemed as heavy as lead, pack-straps cut into the shoulders, the inner leather band of the cap wrinkled by sweat pinched the scalp. The watchful Criquet kept an eye on the laggards, took them aside, and made them execute the movements over and over, directly before him.

After twenty minutes of this muscle-racking work, Borel found reserve strength, and carried on impassively. At the end of half an hour, Criquet ordered—

"At ease!"

He then passed down the line, examined each piece, worked the bolts, searched for rust, handed out punishment freely. Arriving before Borel, he tore the rifle roughly from his hands, turned it over, frowned.

"Rifle—deplorable—condition," he said. "Three days—guard house."

"But I was just given it," Borel protested.

Criquet looked at him scornfully.

"Three days more for arguing," he declared.

Then added loudly, so that every one could hear:

"Ah, the line regiments sent us their refuse. Well, we'll make soldiers out of them. Yes, it is said you have a bad habit of striking sergeants. Good, my man, good! You're headed straight for Biribi!"

Inferior mentally to many of his men, Criquet boasted a physical superiority. Borel, his superior both in intelligence and strength, was therefore a chosen victim.

The private accepted the second punishment in silence.

"Ah, you smile," Criquet went on. "You are a humorist. Well, take three more days."

An hour in the battalion, and nine days in the guard-house!

The inspection over, drill resumed—running, jumping, forming fours, endlessly. At four o'clock, when the final bugle sounded, Borel was dead-tired. In the guard-house, he found a rough plank, and the cheerful prospect that this would be his bed for nine nights.

The following day he received four more days punishment for tarnished buttons, on which *he* could not perceive a dull spot, and a broken shoe-lace which had snapped during the strenuous drill.

It was two weeks before he returned to the barracks.

The hard mattress felt tender after the planking. But he was immediately crowded

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by Desmard, who rolled himself into a ball, with sharp, protruding elbows. Taps sounded. The place was silent, save for the heavy breathing of tired men. The moonlight streamed in at the windows and traced ghostly patterns on the floor, turned the sleeping humanity into formless heaps. The place was heavy with the smell of reeking bodies, and the alcoholic fumes of those who had gone to town in the evening.

Sickened, Borel got up and went to the open window, where he stood with his back braced against the wall. His throat was tight, and he felt that he would break into sobs, should he be compelled to speak.

To have hoped and planned—and to end here, for five years. One thousand, eight hundred and eleven days more! The total appalled him. Could he endure the strain? Would he survive? He did not question his physique, for he knew he would not die of hardship. But mentally? Would he turn into a semi-brute, considering the evasion of a rule, or a night of cheap debauch in a low café as the supreme achievement of life? Would he fawn before the sergeant as others did; lie, cheat, steal? Would he feel like murdering a comrade because he stole a part of the wine ration?

He thought of writing home for money. With a few hundred francs judiciously distributed, he could ease his life, become a protégé of the sergeant, buy wine for the whole squad, attain a certain false popularity. His father had written him, telling him that he understood his misfortune, that out of this crucible, this trial by fire, he would emerge a better man. And he had offered money, though advising his son to refuse, as money would lead him into pitfalls.

His father, moral, peaceful, fat with rich living, did not know what this life could do to a man. Did he realize that out of one thousand sent into the battalion, not a single one pulled out untainted, whole in self-respect?

No, he would not send for money. He would do on his five centimes a day, his tobacco issue, and the army food. And when he came out, he would make his way without his father's influence, keep to the principle which he felt was right, in spite of his bad luck. His father had offered, on his eighteenth birthday, to send him through military school, to Saint Cyr, where he could have come out a full-fledged officer, with gold braid on his sleeves. He had preferred to enlist as a private, to pay the full price. And he was paying. He must serve his five years, and come out, himself, a man with ideals, and a soul.

Five years, one thousand, eight hundred and eleven days more.

"Down-hearted?"

Frog Head was at his elbow.

Borel nodded and tried to speak.

Frog Head laid a huge hand on his shoulder.

"I know," he whispered. "It's harder on you. You were brought up different. That's why the sergeant hates you. It ain't every day that he gets a man like you under his thumb. When he talks to you, don't answer. If you do, he'll railroad you into Biribi. I've been there. I know——"

He paused, thinking.

"The sun, the flies, the rock-piles! Let Criquet spit on you, man, but don't talk!"

Under Frog Head's tuition, Borel learned how to avoid punishment. Before every inspection, he cleaned his rifle before witnesses, shined his buttons, polished his shoes. Criquet sent him to the guard-house for neglect of equipment. He sent a written protest, signed by two of his comrades, to the Officer of the Day.

At first, this brought no result. Then, one morning, the captain casually strolled up, just as Criquet had handed out an undeserved sentence. After a personal inspection of the questioned object, the captain promptly meted out a week's confinement to barracks to the surprized sergeant.

This apparently ended the persecution.

AS THE months went by, Borel became stronger, more muscular. The straight living and plain food took effect. His soul was still whole.

Then, the general came down from Oran on inspection tour. He passed the troops in review, complimented the battalion on its fine appearance, pardoned a few who held good records.

Borel knew that his record was studded with such items as— 'Three days guard-house—insolence. Two days guard-house—ill-kept equipment.' And all through Criquet's hatred. Criquet had stood between him and rehabilitation.

The sections had come to a halt. The general had departed. There remained only the lieutenants and the non-coms.

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"Shoulder arms!" Criquet ordered suddenly.

Borel, occupied with his not too pleasant thoughts, was a few seconds late. The fact was undeniable. Criquet came forward, smilingly, and ordered him to step out of rank. He looked the private up and down, fingered his buttons insultingly.

"We've taught you to keep yourself washed and brushed," he remarked. "But you still have to learn how to handle a rifle."

In ordinary time, Borel would have paid no heed to the remark. But fired by resentment, he struggled in vain for control.

"I—" he began, then stopped short.

"Well, go on!" Criquet demanded sarcastically.

"I could use it, should the occasion arise," Borel replied.

He meant that if the battalion were called out against the tribes, he could do his duty. He chose the words purposely to indicate a willingness to atone for his supposed shortcomings. Again, he had said too much.

"Threats?" Criquet bellowed. "Ah, my man, I am one sergeant you won't strike."

He stepped briskly to the lieutenant, saluted, spoke a few hasty words. That officer started, turned around, then came to the section.

"What's this, Borel? You threaten Sergeant Criquet!"

"No, sir."

"He did," Criquet shouted. "He said—'I could use it *on you* should the occasion arise.' He has struck a sergeant before. He is dangerous. I demand an inquest."

The lieutenant was annoyed. The incident was unpleasant. He turned to the men near at hand.

"You," he demanded. "What did Borel say?"

"Couldn't hear——"

The lieutenant asked others in turn, received the same non-commital answer. Then he came to Desmard. The little fellow glanced at the sergeant, who stood directly behind the officer. Criquet's expression was not pleasant.

"Come, answer me," the lieutenant pressed.

Desmard moistened his dry lips, looked about. Then answered—

"I heard——"

"What?"

"What Borel said to the sergeant," Desmard evaded.

"What did he say?"

"That he could use the rifle on him——"

"You'll testify to this?"

Desmard again glanced at Criquet.

"Yes," he whispered.

The lieutenant turned to Borel.

"I warned you to behave when you first came here. I guess Biribi is the place for a stubborn brute of your sort."

Then to Criquet:

"Make out your report, bring it to me, and I'll pass the affair through the usual channels. It won't drag, I promise you!"

Criquet saluted, gave Borel a glance of triumph, then dismissed the section.

Borel, in the barracks, sat on his cot, dazed, dismayed. One minute, all had been well, the next he had been in trouble. Now there was a strong chance that he would be sent to Biribi.

"Desmard—where is Desmard," Frog Head was demanding.

The little fellow stepped forward.

"I couldn't help it— I had to speak. The—sergeant—looked at me——"

"Looked at you, eh?" Frog Head exclaimed. "Well, we'll do more then look at you if you swear to what you said in court."

"If I don't," Desmard said, "it will mean Biribi for me."

"You might as well go as Borel, you little knock-kneed, filthy runt," Frog Head burst out.

Desmard sank on the other side of the cot, sobbing.

Borel almost forgot his own trouble in the little man's anguish. After all, Desmard was a weakling, with no moral backbone, and little physical resilience. He was more to be pitied then blamed. Each man acted according to his impulses, to his capacity. Desmard dare not go against the sergeant's wishes. He, Borel, lacked the strength of self-control. Should he, who could not master his own emotions, brand Desmard as a coward? Borel had spoken to save himself from humiliation, Desmard to escape the sergeant's hatred. Who was the weaker? There was not much choice.

"Desmard acted under fear," Borel said to Frog Head. "I might as well go to Biribi now and be done with it. Criquet would land me there ultimately. This breaks the suspense——"

He smiled weakly.

"If you're sent to the rock-pile, he follows you," Frog Head threatened impetuously.

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There were murmurs of assent.

"What's the use? He is a dog. He can't help biting. Leave him alone," Borel replied.

"Maybe I'm a dog," Desmard agreed. "But I'll show you! The first chance I get, Criquet gets his!"

Laughter greeted this. Borel could not help but join in. Desmard, the coward, shooting a man! Desmard was plied with questions as to how, when, and where the tragedy was to take place. He did not answer, but stared into space, perhaps seeing the vision of himself shooting down the sergeant.

Borel gathered his belongings in preparation to leave.

There was a rattle of arms outside. Then the door flew open and Sergeant Criquet strode within, stepped to Borel's side, laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Come on—all aboard for Biribi!" he announced.

Four soldiers, bayoneted rifles in hand, who had entered with Criquet, now closed about Borel, who spoke a last word to Frog Head.

Sergeant Criquet turned around, and looked at the ex-Apache. The latter returned the stare insolently, not even coming to attention.

"It's a shame to separate two loving friends. I'll see that you're sent down there with the next batch," he said with a laugh.

He nodded to Desmard to follow, and led the way. The guards marched Borel rapidly across the yard, entered the office. The gendarmes were already there to take him away.

The commanding major presided, by his side a captain and a lieutenant. The charges were read rapidly. Borel only caught the words:

"Threats—Sergeant Criquet—persistent neglect of effects—insolence—must be made example to others——"

There was no pretense at defense. The issue was foregone. Borel's record, on paper, looked bad. The major tugged at his mustaches, drew out a form, signed it. Then, glancing up, he saw Desmard.

"What's the matter with this one?" he asked.

"He's the witness," Criquet replied.

"Oh, is he? Good. I presume he swears to the charge?"

"Yes, sir," Criquet answered.

"Then have him sign a statement."

Desmard signed the document without reading. Borel was astonished at the speed with which things were concluded. Possibly, the major had an appointment for a game of cards. With four gold stripes on each sleeve, and four winding about one's cap, a private's liberty was of little importance.

But the major addressed him kindly enough:

"I hope that you'll reform. You don't seem a stupid fellow. Your record—" he clucked his tongue regretfully. "Your record is full of bad marks. You'll stay down there a year. I hope it does you good."

"I hope so myself," Borel replied seriously.

"Incorrigible," muttered the major, as he left.

"Back to Ahamar for you," Criquet remarked.

"Ahamar!" Borel breathed.

"Yep. The fourth Company—that's where you're sent to."

Ahamar! He would see Duflos, d'Arcy. His comrades of the old regiment would see him in his dirty fatigue-clothing, under Turco guards. Convicted criminals, with Private Borel conspicuous by the tall stature that was to have insured him a future in the army. Sinking—sinking—from the regiment to the Bat'. d'Af', then to the disciplinary company, Biribi. And it was as hard to climb as it was easy to fall.

Gendarmes approached, took charge of him. Outside, some distance away, he turned, and saw Criquet on the threshold, lighting a cigaret, smiling.

SERGEANT MULOT was in charge of the disciplinary detachment in Ahamar.

"Ah, a new one!" he said, as he peered over the books and papers scattered on his table.

Borel, anxious to give a good first impression, kept silent. The Turcos guarding him, tall, leath natives in gaudy uniforms, had grounded their rifles, and were staring blankly into space, not interested in the conversation.

"Let'see—we have three camps in the desert, building telegraph stations," Mulot went on.

Borel's hope rose. If they would only send

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him to one of these out of the way places!

"But you look like a peaceful fellow. I'll keep you here."

Mulot opened one of the huge registers and filled in Borel's approximate weight, height, coloring. A space, close to the margin remained for the name. The sergeant picked up the paper sent forward by the major. And his face changed.

"Borel—Borel—" he muttered. "Threatened a sergeant——"

Again, Borel found himself confronted by the past. A single gesture, a year ago, in answer to an insult! He was tempted to protest his good intentions, but he seemed to hear the echo of Frog Head's warning—

"Keep your mouth shut."

"You seem to hold sergeants in particular spite, eh?" Mulot was asking.

"No, sir."

"Then you hate everybody as much—" The sergeant picked up an eraser. "I guess I'll send you to one of the camps."

Borel tried to conceal his elation.

But Mulot apparently changed his mind. He wrote Borel's name in a large, neat hand, looked up and said:

"Don't want to mess up my book. But, mind you, though I'm a good fellow, don't try any of your tricks. I'd have you before a firing-squad in no time. Beware of the third offense!"

The firing squad! Impossible! But the Bat' d'Af' had seemed far away, and so had the disciplinary company. Yes, he might face the firing-squad, here in Ahamar, in Ahamar, where Duflos was stationed. A sudden thought came to him—this time—yes, his third offense would be real.

He caught a fleeting expression of fear on Mulot's face, and he realized that something of his somber mood had contracted the muscles about his eyes. Perhaps his eyes carried the same menace he had often seen lurking beneath the furtive lids of the Apache.

He wondered at himself. Yes, something was changing inside of him, deep within. Was it good, evil?

He did not know.

III

BOREL glared at the rock-pile. His hammer rose and fell steadily, and yet the heap did not perceptibly decrease. The sun baked his back, seeped through the light cloth neck-cover that depended from his battered fatigue-cap. Rifle slung muzzle downward from the shoulder, the Turcos on watch strolled nonchalantly up and down. In his smart white uniform, little Mulot inspected, commented, punished. The monotonous smacks of iron on stone resounded everywhere, the chips flew, glinting in the glare of the day. The shirts, drenched with perspiration, adhered to the men's backs, revealing the salient muscles moving beneath the skin.

Some one was singing as he worked, a lonesome wail, tuneless, endless.

There was no loud talk, as conversation was forbidden. Mulot's cigaret, dangling precariously from his pendulous lips, aroused much envy. All thought of sleep and food. Then, suddenly, a quarrel broke out, one of the useless, causeless altercations, a result of the dreary existence and of sun

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madness. The two men rose, grappled like tigers, blows thumped. The Turcos arrived on the run, separated the combatants, whose brutal faces were battered and bleeding.

"Voice of Pride—a cry, mighty as the blare of a horn,
Stars of blood sprinkling a golden cuirass——."

Some one close by recited. Borel turned, saw one of the convicts looking amusedly at the struggling men, mocking their spirit that could still resent insult after the heart-breaking toil on the piles.

"One staggers through a heat of conflagration,
But still, the voice bellows as a hunting horn!"

Borel had concluded, aloud, the verses the other had started. The man started, looked sharply at Borel.

"Ah, you have read Verlaine?" he asked.

"And admired him, yes."

"You've come to an ideal place to cultivate poetry," the other remarked sarcastically.

They looked at each other appraisingly. Borel's first glimpse was of the low, broad brow, the straight, fine nose, the full lips, the crown of crisp, curly black hair. The body was of medium height, the chest broad, deep. The wrists, wide and powerful, terminated in small but muscular hands, horny from steady contact with the sledge handle. The eyes were of a peculiar dark-blue, transparent, as if in looking within them, one sank through fathomless space. There was a peculiar mesmeric quality about the glance, something not altogether Occidental about the face.

"You're new," the man remarked.

"Arrived this morning," Borel replied. "My name is Borel."

"Mine's Caverlet," came the answer. "What shed are you in?"

"I'm assigned to number twelve."

"We're room-mates," Caverlet stated.

The Turco close to them admonished in bad French—

"No talk-eh—no talk——"

"All right, Bico," replied Caverlet, using the nickname applied to all Arabs by the troopers of the Colonial Army.

Work was resumed. There was no chance for further conversation that afternoon. When the sun sank, the laborers were marched back to the disciplinary company camp, which was situated between the regimental barracks and the town.

As he entered hut number twelve, Borel had a first impression of utter confusion, mattresses on the floor, boxes, bottles, clothing scattered about. The ceiling was low, the room dark, save for the interstices between the loosely-jointed planks, through which pencils of light streamed in from the glaring sand spread outside.

"There are four bunks free," Caverlet suggested. "But I think that this one—" he indicated one— "has less signs of activity."

Borel lifted the mattress, shook out the ragged blankets. The sand dust rose chokingly.

"Fleas?" Borel questioned.

"As many as you wish."

"Lice, spiders, flies," a cheerful comrade volunteered.

Borel disposed of his belongings without asking more questions, wishing to give the instant impression that he was an old hand at the game.

Huge tins of stew arrived. The men, after dispatching the rough food, separated into groups, talked, played cards. Borel and Caverlet by common desire sought each other out. Men of like taste gravitate into groups in any aggregation. Each was glad to have some one to whom he could talk. They conversed of literature. Borel felt the incongruous in the mention of de Musset, Baudelaire, Verlaine, and even Hugo, here in the squalid hut, with the Turco outside singing to himself one of the rambling ballads so dear to the Moslem heart.

From general topics, they came to personal matters. Borel found that the other knew of him, so that his tale was soon told.

"And how did you come here?" he asked. "What was your particular vice?" he added laughingly.

Caverlet grinned bitterly.

"When I was eighteen, I enlisted in the Spahis," he began in a low voice. "The crack cavalry of the Colonial Army, first to fight and all that glory business, gorgeous uniforms, floating burnous, red embroidered vest, baggy trousers, fine horses. I served in various cities of Algeria for five years. Then I was promoted to sergeant, sent to Ain Ben Khelil.

"There was a music-hall in town, on one of the side streets. We non-coms. used to gather in the evening, drink, brag, smoke, and look at the dancing *Moukeres*. We occupied the ground floor, leaving the boxes up-stairs to the officers.

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"One evening, a new singer arrived from France. She was still passable, and created quite a sensation. The next night, all of us non-coms brought her a huge bouquet. I was chosen to make the presentation. Another bouquet, however, was thrown from the boxes, fell at her feet. You know the way those things are done. The spirit of competition in everything. In two bounds, I was on the stage. The girl took my bouquet, kissed me. Every one laughed, applauded. In a gesture I meant to be comical, I sent the neglected bunch of posies spinning up into the boxes.

"We were off duty, outside barracks. There was no thought of disrespect to the officers. Worse things had been done, and laughed at. A lieutenant rose to his feet. He was drunk—and angry. He caught sight of my Spahis uniform, and called me a mistaken Arab, in pungent language.

"I have—had a hot temper. The insult was public. I was a trifle intoxicated, and in the midst of a dream of popularity. I stood for a second in front of that crowd, with the girl on my arms, then ran to one end of the stage. The edge of the boxes was perhaps four feet away. I leaped, grasped the railing, clambered up. I found the lieutenant, slapped his face. Seems childish now, as I recall it.

"Then there was a pretty riot. The police tried to come up to arrest me. My friends down-stairs drew their sabers. Some one from the pit threw a bottle which laid open the scalp of an officer. Attracted by the uproar, the night patrol arrived, broke in the front door with rifle-butts. The net casualties were six broken heads, and nine other hospital cases.

"The music hall was put out of business. I was court-martialed. The whole regiment was for me, from the colonel down to the last private. The lieutenant I had struck manfully declared that he was drunk, that he had caused the fight. He even stood up in court, and spoke for me. Useless. That —— Captain Duflos had just made his speech, the general had sent a circular which no one dared disobey. I was condemned.

"And, before being sent here, I was degraded. I was compelled to stand before the entire Regiment of Spahis, while a sergeant tore off my stripes and buttons, dashed them to the ground, and declared me unworthy of bearing arms for France. Humiliation! I know what it is. Some one will pay for it, some day."

"And since then?" Borel asked.

"Here—rock-pile, sledge-hammer—curses—the silo upon the least provocation. A hole in the ground, where you bake in the day-time, freeze at night. Nothing to console one but these."

He brought out a few books, thumbed and tattered volumes.

"Windows, looking out on life—" Caverlet added. "I read, and forget."

Weeks went by eventlessly. Mulot was not severe, and life was bearable. Work, eat, sleep, and the few moments snatched at night to lose himself in the books loaned by Caverlet. Borel grew more silent, more sullen.

Caverlet also was thoughtful, reserved, forever brooding. But one night he appeared more animated than usual. After taps had strung out its thin notes, after the last echo had died away, he called Borel to his side. All the others were asleep, the deathlike sleep of absolute exhaustion.

"I am going to town tonight. Coming too?" Caverlet asked.

Going to town, with the sentry outside, with two others farther down the line, clad in their dirty fatigue-clothes, easily to be recognized by the night patrols!

"How?" Borel muttered in amazement.

Caverlet lifted his mattress, revealed two suits of white drill, such as the civilian traders wore in town, shirts, neckties, canvas shoes, soft hats!

"With these," he said.

"But the Turcos outside, the sentries?"

"Leave them to me."

It was some minutes before Caverlet pulled out the clothing and allowed Borel to get dressed. The last restless comrade had quieted down. Borel donned the civilian garments, which seemed strange and uncomfortable. As in a dream, he followed Caverlet, who opened the door noiselessly and clicked his tongue to attract the guard's attention.

The Turco, startled, turned around, and challenged, in French—

"Qui vive?"

Caverlet addressed him in Arabic. Borel caught a menacing ring to his voice. The Turco protested. Then came the word—"Imouhars" repeated several times. And, finally, the Turco allowed them to pass. They walked across the open space to the

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next sentry, where the same weird controversy occurred. "Imouhars" again won the way.

"What does 'Imouhars' mean?" Borel questioned when they were in the first narrow street of Ahamar.

"In this case 'Open Sesame,'" Caverlet replied. "Now talk of commercial things. Here comes the patrol."

Borel loudly demanded particulars on the recent quotations on dates, as the six troopers tramped by, and the two continued up the street.

Of a sudden, Caverlet disappeared from view, seemingly off into space or, as Borel moved forward and saw, swallowed up by a wall, that melted off in the darkness. He stood nonplused staring up and down the obscure street.

"Here," came the whisper.

He was dragged through a doorway, the door swung shut.

"I came ahead to inform them I was not alone."

Borel found himself standing in a long corridor, lighted by an oil-lamp depending from the ceiling, revealing leprous white walls.

"Where are we?" he asked.

"This is an Arab café belonging to Kaouadji Ali. He has another place with dancing girls, beer and wine, for the Roumis. The French never come here. It is not subject to the closing law. Here one can smoke *kief*, and listen to the true tales of the Faithful."

The freedom from the prison was exhilarating. Caverlet stepped lightly as he led the way across the patio where a gleaming jet of water played in the starlight, to a large room, devoid of furniture, save for mats spread on the ground.

A few Arabs were lying about, seemingly asleep.

"In the sweet dreams of *kief*," Caverlet laughed, and went on to explain: "Hemp. They smoke it. Worse than drink, more stupefying than opium, and not half as pleasant."

He squatted on a mat, and invited Borel to do likewise. A hand-clap summoned a servant, a graceful Arab youth of perhaps fourteen. Upon request, he brought Arab cakes and coffee, in tiny brass cups.

As Borel sat there, sentries and rock-breaking sifted into the background. Here indeed was a haven of peace. The monotonous undertone of conversation in a strange tongue seemed far away, and he glided off into a delicious sensation of well-being. The clean shirt felt pleasant. The sight of his legs encased in well-pressed trousers, the change from cord-soled sandals to real shoes of civilian pattern, gave him the exhilaration of a schoolboy on a holiday.

"Got an important letter from France today," Caverlet began. "Telling me that nothing could be done to get me out. And another important letter from—elsewhere. Look.

"He handed Borel a sheet of parchment, perhaps four inches square, on which were printed strange characters.

"Arabic?" Borel wondered.

"No, Tiffinar."

"What's that?"

"Targui writing."

Targui—Tuareg, the nomad bandits of the desert. What had Caverlet to do with them?

"I am expecting friends tonight, here," Caverlet stated.

He leaned forward as if to enlighten Borel on the mystery.

At that moment, a shuffling was heard in the courtyard, the door opened, and three men entered.

"Here they come, now," Caverlet informed him. "Just bow, and look wise. I'll tell you later."

Borel started with a first instinctive dread.

The men were tall. Their eyes only were visible. Keen, roving, hard, they seemed to bore straight into one. Borel became aware of a great similarity between their eyes and those of his friend, Caverlet.

Caverlet rose and bowed gravely. Borel gained his feet, imitated him. The strangers wore vast enveloping garments, black in color, baggy trousers and veils which masked the lower part of the face, also black. From the sleeves, that rolled back on the arms with the gesture of greeting, protruded muscular arms, and, strapped to the forearm, a sheathed dagger.

Coffee was brought for them.

Then, to Borel's amazement, Caverlet engaged in a long conversation with the strangers. Once, he turned to Borel, apologized briefly for the use of a language he did not understand. These men were evidently Tuareg. Where had Caverlet learned the Tamashek tongue? What was

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he planning? What was the meaning of that word "Imouhars?"

It was some time before the Desert Men got up and bade a formal farewell. The soft shuffling of their sandals across the pavement dwindled off into the hush outside.

"When do I get the key to the mystery?" Borel asked.

Caverlet smiled.

"Curious?"

"Feel as though I had been smoking *kief* and not awakened."

"What do you want to know?"

"Everything."

With a certain vibrant undertone of compressed emotion, Caverlet narrated, a strange story, a tale of the freedom of the open, of war, of blood, of love——

IV

THE horizon ran around the edges of the world, devoid of any object to strike the eye. Emptiness, absolute solitude.

The fine dust rose from beneath the animal-line in a cloud that choked, clung to the nostrils and lips. The dromedaries swung and pitched like vessels in a seaway. From the mounted Tirailleurs—native infantrymen in French service—came the far from melodious singing of a weird Arab ballad.

"When are we to reach water?" Doctor Armand Caverlet asked Colonel Humbers.

"At sundown," the colonel replied.

"The pack-beasts are getting tired. Nine days without water is a long time, even for a camel. And we have but few hours' supply for the men."

"It's all right," Humbers answered. "The guides are sure of the next well."

Caverlet glanced back at the caravan—fifty Tirailleurs, thirty Arab *goumiers*, six Tuareg guides, and six white men; Colonel Humbers, Captains Castel and Mousson, Lieutenant Dupuis, and two non-commissioned officers. Ninety racing dromedaries, called *mehara*, one hundred and eighty pack-camels.

Some one, in the musty Colonial Office in Paris, had conceived a gigantic scheme. To conceive is one thing, to execute is another. The gentleman of genius did not come down to Algeria to carry out his plan. Why should he disturb himself, when the garrison-towns in the South Oran Province were filled with officers anxious for advancement? He contented himself with sending orders. The wires hummed.

It was in the early eighteen-eighties. Stanley had crossed the African Continent. So had Livingstone and Rohlfs. England had planted her flag on many new territories. Germany, who for over a decade had been launched out on a policy of extension at all costs, was beginning to take interest in Africa. France did not intend to be left behind.

Angling for the Island of Madagascar, carrying on minor wars in Tonkin and Cambodgia, did not leave enough energy, or troops, to spare. The indicated start into the Soudan was through Dakar, in Senegal, or one of the trading-posts under the tricolor on the Guinea or Ivory Coast. A gunboat, a well-equipped expedition, and the way would have been opened.

The thinkers, seated on their leather upholstered chairs, with their feet on foot-warmers, had more spectacular plans. Why not penetrate into the Soudan, from north, through the Sahara Desert? They had never seen the desert. It seemed an easy enterprise—a few thousand miles on camel-back.

The proposed expedition was to find, as it progressed, the most favorable railroad route between Algeria and a point midway between the Niger River and Lake Chad. The officers clamored for the leadership. It was indeed a great chance for advancement. Colonel Humbers got the appointment, rightly, for he had explored the northern Sahara and had done work of great merit. He was essentially a soldier. He did not realize that a small party had greater chance of success. In the desert, the wind has ears and tells tales.

The colonel had engaged parleys with several of the Tuareg chiefs, and received promises that they would not interfere with the march. But it is probable that they regarded with suspicious eyes this gathering of forces to enter on their ground.

The column left with Chambaa guides, from Ouagla. These guides were to be replaced later by others promised by the Tuareg. The pack-camels swayed under heavy loads. To take sufficient water for the immense aggregation, more pack-animals were needed. These in turn needed water. So, a vicious circle was formed.

The Amki Oasis, nine hundred miles to

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the south of Ouagla was reached in five weeks. The Tuareg guides were found waiting there. Humbers relaxed his last suspicion, and set out, light-heartedly, for the Soudan. But the next water-hole three days to the south, proved dry.

Doctor Caverlet was uneasy.

"Do you completely trust the Tuareg guides?" he asked the phlegmatic colonel.

Humbers looked at him amusedly.

"Your worry is without foundation, Caverlet, I have their chiefs' promise."

But Dr. Caverlet knew something of the complexity of native character.

"The slightest departure from the agreement will cause them to forget their promise," he insisted.

"They would have attacked us before now," Humbers said, and urged his beast forward, evidently annoyed by the medical man's persistence.

Caverlet, so rebuffed, rode silently, his tall body swaying easily to the *mehari's* motion. He was filled with the peculiar elation that sometimes comes to the desert traveler. From fear to exultation——

A shot from the rear drew his attention. Turning, he became aware of confusion in the middle of the long camel-line. Followed by the colonel, he made for the spot with all the speed of the racing *mehari*. One of the Tuareg guides lay on the ground, bleeding. His long silex rifle had been discharged accidentally, and the lead bullet had torn through his thigh. His companions, tall veiled riders, had gathered about him.

Caverlet bared the man's legs, probed, and deftly withdrew the projectile, washed and bandaged the wound. The Targui, whose veil had fallen off, watched him unconcerned, as if insensible to pain. His companions exclaimed in wonder at the white man's skilful operation. They spoke volubly in Arabic, a tongue with which the doctor had some little acquaintance.

"You are a great marabout!"

"Had that bullet gone a few inches further up, through the belly, no holy man could have saved him."

Colonel Humbers drew the pipe from between his teeth.

"Bad?" he asked, laconically.

"No. But it will be unless we reach water soon."

AT SUNDOWN, they reached the next water-hole—dry. The Tuareg were surprized. The Tirailleurs grumbled. Two pack-camels died. The water-cans were found almost empty. A last ration was issued. The white men decided to hold a council.

Caverlet spoke first.

"We should go back now and make for the last water-hole. We would lose pack-camels and baggage, it is true, but we would save lives. Who knows where the next well is? Since we have taken the Tuareg guides we have not struck water. Every day adds to the danger."

Humbers seemed made of iron. He could stand privation and failed to take into consideration the suffering of his men.

"The Soudan is ahead. We have orders. We move ahead."

The other officers agreed.

The Tirailleurs became unruly. Fighting broke out in the ranks. The next day, more camels died. During that night, the Arab camel-men began to desert. Humbers, himself, became uncertain, and the morale sank very low. The colonel called the Tuareg guides and questioned them.

"Where is the next well?"

"Ahead."

"How far?"

The Targui who acted as spokesman extended his hand, five fingers outspread.

"Is there no water nearer than five days?"

"Yes, but not on this route."

Humbers consulted with his officers and it was decided to swerve from the course.

"Where is the water?"

The Targui pointed to the east.

"Over there."

"How far?"

"We can reach it in the morning by traveling the day and all night. The well is called Bir-el-Goleah."

"Lead us."

That night, as the expedition proceeded, the moonlight projected the demeasured shadows grotesquely on the dunes, as a procession of death fantoms pursuing the travelers. The soil became more rocky, hilly. The tired beasts stumbled. Weakened men fell from their mounts. Caverlet was kept busy.

As the sun rose, they reached the crest of the cup-like rim that edged Bir-el-Goleah. When the men saw the limpid surface they

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shouted and urged their mounts forward. A scuffle might have poluted the water. Humbers, in this emergency, showed his genuine ability. Revolver in hand, he organized the distribution of water. Each was served in his turn, himself the last.

Caverlet advised once again, that with replenished water supply, they make for the return route, and Ouagla. But Humbers was in fine spirit, and after sufficient rest, the column again got under way.

The sky was clear. There was a slight wind, cool, quieting. The start seemed auspicious. Humbers, who rode ahead, as usual, called the doctor to his side.

"Admit that you've been pessimistic, Caverlet," he said. "Everything is shaping out for our success."

"So far, so good."

"Perhaps it is in keeping with your profession to see the worst side of things," Humbers laughed.

Caverlet did not pick up the remark, but looked straight ahead puzzled.

Above the far dunes appeared a long line of *mehara*, mounted by men wielding the tall spears of the Tuareg.

Humbers took out his field-glasses.

"The Amenoukal of the Ahagar, doubtless come to escort me," he said.

"Or to get your pack-camels," Caverlet retorted.

"See, he makes the sign of peace."

The leader of the newcomers approached rapidly with a number of his men. They held their hands above their heads, palms outward. Humbers did likewise, as did Captain Castel, who had come forward to join them.

The Amenoukal came close. His mount knelt, and he slid off gracefully, and came forward. Humbers dismounted in his turn, his example followed by Captain Castel. Caverlet kept his seat, following in this the example of the Amenoukal's followers.

"Greetings," the Amenoukal said, in Arabic.

"Greetings to thee, Ikerouk," replied the colonel.

"The road is closed to thee and thine," the Targui announced. "Abandon thy camels and return."

Humbers stared unbelievingly. The blood rose from his neck and suffused his face. The demand was indeed high-handed, made thus to a man with ninety rifles at his command.

"I will not!" Humbers finally exploded wrathfully.

"We are five hundred," the Amenoukal said gravely.

"We are ninety. Odds are even," Humbers replied. "I give you five minutes to clear the way."

The Tuareg chief went back to his dromedary, lifted his hand.

A shot came from the knot of his men halted close by, and Humbers pitched forward on his face. Caverlet drew his revolver, and brought the assassin tumbling down from his saddle. Captain Castel ran for his mount, but before he could gain his seat, a mounted Targui hurled by and killed him with a swing of his long, broad sword. Humbers who was only wounded, rose to his feet and fired at the group.

Rifles were crackling now from the fast oncoming Tirailleurs, directed at the bulk of the Tuareg who were making their way down the flank of the dune with the speed of the wind. A rider bore down upon Humbers. Cavarlet fired and missed. The colonel was struck by a lance tip, dragged a few feet, then remained stretched out, dead.

The tragedy had not taken sixty seconds.

Camels and men fell on all sides.

The long *mekabels* of the Tuareg, while lacking the precision of the hard-shooting Gras rifles in the hands of the French force, made up in number what they lacked in accuracy. The bullets thudded into riders and mounts. Captain Mousson, the next in command after Humbers and Castel, who were both dead, assumed responsibility with commendable decision. He formed the caravan into a rough square, and beat a retreat in an orderly manner. The Tuareg hung on like wolves for perhaps half an hour, then withdrew and disappeared as suddenly as they had come.

Mousson struck out for the nearest water-hole, then wheeled to the west for a hundred miles, and proceeded northward.

For three days, they eluded the pursuers, but were again brought to a stand and completely surrounded. When they at last extricated themselves by a vigorous charge, but twelve Arabs and twenty-two Tirailleurs were left.

Late the same afternoon, Lieutenant Dupuis went down with a missile in his chest, fired at three hundred yards by a lone rider.

The force dwindled to sixteen Tirailleurs and seven Arabs.

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The three white men kept on. The last non-com, a burly, good-natured peasant boy, lacked the nerve resistance of his better educated companions. He went mad and was shot by an Arab whom he attacked. The mounts died one by one, until every man was on foot. When life is at stake, men are capable of great endurance. They walked on, over the hot sand, without water, without food.

The Tuareg hovered close by and killed those who lagged or strayed. Doubtless, they did not wish to attack. It was only a matter of time when the last of the isolated men would give out.

THE heart-breaking walk lasted five days.

All were delirious. There was not the slightest semblance of discipline. At last, they came to a well with two or three inches of mud at the bottom. Around the brim grew blades of grass, yellowed, anemic, struggling against the withering heat. The Tirailleurs crazed with hunger, fought among themselves. One was killed, and the starving men became cannibals and tore at the flesh of their dead comrade.

Caverlet suddenly became aware that Mousson was gone. How, he never knew. Sickened by the savage scene, the delirium at last vanquishing his brain, he walked alone, away from the rest. An intense fever burned in his veins. He walked on and on. Mid-way between land and zenith, hung the mirage created by thirst, vast oases, forests of palm-trees, their feet bathed in limpid water that bubbled and sparkled. Cities of dazzling white, each terrace roofed with gold, the ogival windows reflecting the turquoise of a boundless sheet of water——

Mixed with these images, groups of riders appeared. Tuareg!

Are they real, or only a further manifestation of delirium? They come close, detach themselves from the fantom background, bear down upon him. The sand spurts from beneath the great hoofs of the *mehara*.

The end, Caverlet thinks. He has no more strength to struggle, not even the wish to escape. Death, unavoidable, is preferable to the lingering grip of madness that will ultimately be his destruction. He falls on his knees, then flat on his face, arms outspread, his head uncovered to the broiling rays.

The riders dismount. Caverlet hears them, as if a long distance off. Then, he feels himself grasped, held, turned over. The sun hurts his eyes, but a veil soon covers them. At his mouth are the rounded hard lips of a native water-jar. The fluid pours over his swollen tongue, down his throat. Water——

In a half-faint, he is taken to one of the camels, and strapped in the saddle. The lurching of the animal tells him that they are on the way. Where? Why did they not kill him as the others? He can not think. The effort is too great.

His head falls back. He sleeps.

DOCTOR CAVERLET awoke to find himself on a fashion of sofa.

Slanting above him was the cloth wall of a tent. Squatting in the opening a white-clad Targui, rifle across his knees.

He lifted himself on one elbow, called out—

"Water!"

The guard appeared to understand when he repeated it in Arabic, for he brought him a jar, filled to the brim.

"Who art thou?" Caverlet asked.

"A servant of the Amenoukal."

"Of the Ahagars?"

"Of the Ahagars."

The Targui resumed his vigil, rifle in hand.

Presently, the Amenoukal entered. Only his eyes were visible in the slit between the upper and lower veils, deep eyes, that seemed to embrace, in their gaze, boundless wastes.

"Greetings, stranger," he said.

"I hold no greetings for a murderer," Caverlet muttered, too weak to rise.

"As thou wishest," the Amenoukal replied. "But thou shouldst know, before condemning, why we slew the sidi colonel and his men."

"And not myself."

"Ah, yes. And why we did not slay thee."

"Speak then," Caverlet went on.

The Targui squatted on the floor, drew a pipe from the folds of his clothing, and, lowering the chin veil, lighted it, and puffed thoughtfully. The Targui has in common with the population of the north, a fondness for story-telling.

"Many years ago, in the time of my thirtieth grandfather, the *Imuhars*, whom the Arabs call Tuareg, occupied, together with

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the people now called Berbers, all the great country thy people have taken within recent years. Then, from the East appeared the Arabs, bent on converting all to the faith of their prophet. We tried to fight them, but we had long lived quietly, and they were fired with the spirit of abnegation. We lost. Rather than stay and be slaves, we ran into the desert. *'Tarek'* means to give up. The Arabs therefore called us Tuareg, those who gave up."

Caverlet doubted the etymology, which he had heard explained somewhat differently, but did not protest.

"Through constant contact with the people of the Oases, we embraced the Mahommedan Faith. But we fast not at Radhaman. For hundreds of years, we lived as masters of the desert. Then thy people came. When we saw the sidi colonel with so many rifles, we knew that he was only an advance guard. Under pretense of going to the Soudan, he wanted to get into our country, and capture our villages."

Caverlet could not deny this self-evident truth. It was the ultimate wish of France to tame the Tuareg.

"And so, we killed him and his men."

"But why have you spared me?"

"My men say that thou art a great healer and know all the secrets of the marabouts. A wound that would have festered and caused death, you cared for in a few seconds. We have many wounded during the raids on the caravans. We need thee. See, we have also thy magic amulets."

He reached beneath the sofa and drew out Caverlet's surgeon-kit, which had been lost on one of the abandoned camels.

"I must stay with thee?"

"Forever."

"And what if I should escape?"

"Thou dost not know the wells. Even the fleetest, most resisting *mehari* could not carry thee in one stretch to Ouagla. Thou wilt be with us a long time, indeed."

And so, Armand Caverlet, military doctor, found himself appointed surgeon ordinary to the Ahagar tribe. And yet, a born physician, he could not help but find interest in his work. The wounds were usually severe, for the conical bullet was unknown in the desert, and the long *mekabels* fired pellets that tore through the tissues. He asked the Amenoukal for parchment, kept a record of the cases.

After his first rancor had passed, he came to like these strange people with their lion-like courage and tenacity. He saw the fierce combats in the desert, the pillaging of the Timbuctoo caravans, the capture of long lines of camels, the herding of slaves.

Drunk with the sensation of speed and space, he whirled after the warriors on their long expeditions to the edge of the Soudan, fought against the black Malinkes of eastern Guinea, and, when the tide turned against the Ahagars, shared the heart-breaking privations of flight.

He did not lose hope of escape.

But a lone white man could not get through the Soudan to the coast, for at that time the black populations were fighting against the French, advancing from the west coast.

There were times when the warriors would come back with certain plunder that indicated the presence of Europeans among the caravans attacked and pillaged. In this manner, Caverlet obtained from time to time, a few books, and some months-old newspapers. These were his only communication with the outside world.

THROUGH a dispute over booty, the Ahagars were at odds with another Tuareg tribe, the Taghamas, who had their *douars* some hundreds of miles to the northwest.

Choosing their time when the bulk of the Ahagar warriors were away on raids, the Taghamas attacked. The conflict was savage, but brief. The women and youths struck camp. The remaining warriors covered the retreat. The Taghamas kept alongside. Caverlet relived the horror of the Humbers expedition and massacre.

Then, from the south, appeared the Amenoukal, and his four hundred warriors, returning home. The Taghamas attempted flight, but caught and shattered by the Ahagars' onslaught, they were sabered down to a man. Caverlet, with a flesh wound in his shoulder, worked that night by the light of primitive torches. Man after man lay on the rough planking serving as operating-table. When he had washed his hands, and cleaned his instruments, Amenoukal Ikerouk came to him.

"El Goleah—" for they had called him that, after the water-hole near which he was captured—"my sister is hurt. Wilt thou heal her?"

The doctor followed the Amenoukal into

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the women's section of the camp. He found the girl, lying on a sofa. Despite her protestations, he removed the veils.

"This is no time for modesty," the Amenoukal admonished her, "when life is at stake."

Strangely enough she too was suffering from a flesh-wound in the shoulder. He found occasion to visit her again, and again. Many of the tribes of the Tuareg have mingled with the blacks of the border. But not the Ahagars. The girl's skin was white. And she was beautiful. The inevitable happened. When Caverlet could no longer continue his visits and told her so, she covered her face with her hands, and he knew that she was weeping.

Regardless of the other women hovering about, he took both her hands in his, uncovered her face. Then he did not waste time in careful approach.

"Dost love me?"

She nodded.

"And your brother, will he give thee to me?"

"Ask him."

The chief did not withhold his consent.

"We will have thee all the more to ourselves. For thou wilt become one of us."

Caverlet knew this to be true. But his love was all-compelling—and there seemed no chance of escape. After the marriage, he was no longer watched. Yes, the Taureg knew. When a son was born, Caverlet named him Armand El Goleah, and another link chained him to the desert.

At the age of four the boy played with rifles and swords, straining to lift the huge blades of steel. In spite of Caverlet's protests, the Amenoukal took him on raids, and the boy came back filled with the lust of fighting. And, in the evening, when the ruddy fires shot their glow toward the heavens, the Amenoukal would talk of his nephew's bravery. What a warrior he would make!

At the age of six, the boy had his own *mehari*, a small carbine captured from a caravan, and a sword made especially for him by the camp-armorer. Caverlet wrote a book on military surgery, containing the result of his experiences. The mother, who faded early, as do the women of primitive people, died soon after the boy's sixth birthday, without warning, snuffed out by some mysterious ailment.

IN THE early part of the year 1894, Ikerouk left on a secret errand for the Ouagla Oasis. With him went the Amenoukals of other tribes.

Weeks went by.

Then Ikerouk came back. He had with him newspapers, purchased for Caverlet from the privates in the French post. He also had important news.

"Thy people have taken Timbuctoo," he said.

Timbuctoo, the unattainable, the pearl of the southern desert, taken by the French! From one of the papers, months old, Caverlet learned that a strong column, under command of Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Joffre had entered the town, which was now attached to French dominions.

"We went north to Ouagla to make our peace," the Amenoukal informed him. "We saw the French officer there and crossed our names at the bottom of the page, saying that we would allow the dependents of thy country to go through safely, not to hinder them, but to help them upon a stipulated payment.

"We are to be the watchmen of the desert instead of the despoilers. The business was going to the dogs anyway."

The Amenoukal lowered his veils, and his strong face with the long drooping mustaches and clear, deep eyes, denoted discouragement.

Caverlet liked the Tuareg for their frankness. They did not seek the pretext of war to steal. Piracy was their trade, their means of livelihood. Now all would change. They would turn from wolves to shepherds. Their tall *mehara* would amble along the flanks of a caravan groaning under the weight of merchandise. They would be paid off at the end of the trip like so many policemen.

The Tuareg would at first withstand temptation. Then some day the booty would prove too alluring, or a fight would develop between the caravan personnel and the guides. Men would be killed. Then flying columns of French troops would enter the desert, fight with variable success, ultimately win out.

The Tuareg might even lose their identity, turn from nomads into sedentary tillers of the ground, and merge completely with the stolid Berbers of the oases.

Some day, perhaps, the dream of the Colonial Office would come true. Over

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steel tracks, laid on the bosom of the Sahara, iron coaches would rattle by. There was something superb in the advance of the tri-color into the desert, but the passing of the Tuareg was pathetic. The camp seemed to sense something of the impending transformation, for an air of melancholy hung on the stillness.

"Then I can go back?" Caverlet asked.

"Yes. But the desert will be in thy mind wherever thou goest—and thy son."

"He is coming with me."

"Ah!"

"He is mine, of my people."

The Amenoukal turned away, in silent contemplation of the glowing horizon, reflecting the tawny gold of the sand. He appeared to be straining at a vision of the future.

"He was born and suckled among us," he said, in a low voice. "But take him. When he grows to manhood, he will know his mind. Then will he come back to ride the *mehari* and pace the dunes in the evening solitude, when the wind sings of freedom."

Caverlet made his preparations, gathered the leaves of his book in a soft folder, and a week later, he was ready to set out, under the escort of twenty warriors.

He offered his hand to the chief.

"My friend, I shall think of thee always."

"And I of thee—and of him."

"We have been enemies, we have been friends. I have a son in whose veins flows the blood of thy mother. We are of one family, but I must go."

"I was born on the desert. If I were elsewhere, I would want to come back. I understand."

"Even so it is with me."

"And so it shall be with him. He is of our blood. He will be misunderstood of thy people, and will come back."

"I shall await his manhood and let him choose."

Then Caverlet turned his face toward Ouagla.

Before him rose the vision of France, of home, unrolling across the Mediterranean; France he had never thought to see again. Yes, his boy would not grow up as a savage in the desert.

V

BOREL leaned forward breathlessly. Caverlet's voice dropped to a whisper.

"I have made my choice," he said, slowly. "I can not stay in prison. At ten, I remember, when I was sent to boarding-school, I lived within walls. There was a tall stone affair, surrounding the playground, covered with ivy. I used to climb the chestnut-tree in the yard, and look over that wall, and see more walls. The passion of civilized people for walls. I must get outside the walls——"

"That is the Arab in you."

Caverlet's eyes flashed for a brief moment.

"There is no Arab in me. The Tuareg must have been Christians at one time. They still call God the 'Mesi' from Mesiah. The good spirit, the 'Angelous,' from 'Angel' perhaps. There are traces of the lost crusaders who strayed from the main body during the expedition of Saint Louis. Their sword-hilts are shaped like a cross. Many wear tattoed crosses on their cheeks. But they did not live within walls."

"Was the Amenoukal among the men I saw tonight?"

"He is dead. That's why they are looking for me. The Ahagars need me. I am the new Amenoukal of the tribe."

Borel stared at him unbelievingly, then laughed.

"You— the Amenoukal of the Ahagars, breaking rocks on the highways, and reading French poetry!"

Caverlet's face set.

"It's a great honor," he said.

Borel was immediately contrite.

"Forgive me, old man—but how can you, the son of a captive, be the heir?"

"The Tuareg have a peculiar custom. The title is hereditary, but for reasons best known to themselves, it is handed down, not from father to son, but to the oldest son of the eldest sister of the Amenoukal."

"And they want you?"

"Yes."

"And you will desert?"

"No. I go back to my people. I'll make my way out of camp tomorrow night, get a racing *mehari*, and leave—with little regret. I gave my youth, my aspirations to the army. What has it done to me?"

"The authorities will send camel riders after you. You may be caught."

"What then?"

"Tortured. It is not in code-books, but I have heard—I have heard——"

"I know all that better than you do. I've seen men die here. But how will they know I have left with the Tuareg? And if they

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knew, how could the camel soldiers hope to come after me? The *mehara* of the Tuareg are matchless. And their rifles are as modern as the French, now."

"That's right. There's no chance of your being caught."

"Nor you——"

"What do you mean?"

"From Tangiers, it would be easy to reach Spain. From Spain to the United States or South America. Doesn't it tempt you, Borel?"

Borel stared at him in amazement.

"I can take you, will you come?"

Paul Borel did not answer.

No struggle of physical forces can compare with a battle within a soul.

Borel's training, his childhood, his youth, had been directed toward the making of a patriot. Even now, in the penal colony, he considered himself in the Army of France. And yet, the thought of escape was tempting. To live peacefully in foreign lands—others before him had escaped. Should his horizon be limited by a rock-pile, when the whole world was open with work to be done, opportunity clamoring?

He struggled with himself the next day as he worked on the rock-pile beside Caverlet, Caverlet who soon would be free, 'Amenoukal El Goleah, Chieftain of the Tuareg.

Where were his fine resolutions, to accept his fate meekly, to face the future at the end of the five years with a clean heart, a convicted man in the eyes of others, but clean within himself? And yet, was it a sign of intelligence to suffer meekly for years?

When the men in the barracks were quiet and Caverlet was ready to depart, Borel began to realize what it would mean to be alone, deprived of the companionship that had been so precious. The others were brutalized beyond redemption. He would be alone, alone.

Why need he stay?

And yet, ties stronger than the resentment of unjust punishment seemed to bind him to the place. He loved France. The more he was punished in the name of his country, the greater his ideal grew. France was greater than the system that had condemned him.

However, he could not blame Caverlet for leaving. After that night in the *kief* house, he had seemed to cease to be a Frenchman. Caverlet sensed his loneliness, his weakening, and asked him to go out with him, to see him on his way.

"The Turcos will allow you back," he said. "If they didn't, they know that some night, accounts would be settled."

And so once again they passed beyond the outposts, but this time on the outskirts of the town, where the first surges of the sand-dunes began.

Out of sight of the Turcos, Caverlet brought out a box of matches, lighted three, one after the other.

"They'll be here soon," he said. "It is still time."

"I—I can not."

"You haven't been here long enough to know that you want to leave at any cost. You'll come to it."

"Perhaps."

"I'll be back at the *kief* house in two weeks."

Four gigantic shadows crossed the sands toward them at a terrific pace.

"Here they are."

The *mehara* stopped close by, and knelt. There were two riders and two spare mounts. The men came forward, spoke to Caverlet in Tamashek, handed him some clothing. He slipped on the double shirts of black Sudanese cloth, the flowing burnous, the red chechia under the hood. With the two veils, one over the lower part of his face, the other over his forehead, he was transformed into a Targui. Caverlet was gone. The Amenoukal had taken his place.

The two shook hands again. Neither seemed to be willing to be the first to leave. At last, El Goleah said—

"We must part, brother."

"Luck be with you."

"And with you, Borel—and remember, in two weeks——"

El Goleah hurried to his *mehari*, mounted. The huge beasts rose, swaying and pitching. A soft clucking of the tongue, and they turned their long necks southward, started, lengthening each stride until they appeared to fly over the sand. Borel watched them until they melted off into the starry sky to the south.

Then he slowly made his way back.

THE next morning, at roll-call, when no answer came to the call of Caverlet's number, Mulot started. His placid eyes showed first surprize, then terror. Mulot was in complete charge of

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the detachment in Ahamar. The escape of one of his men would cause him trouble.

"Where is Caverlet?" he shouted.

The men looked at each other in surprize.

Borel, too, simulated astonishment. He would be questioned, he knew. It was common knowledge that he and the escaped men were friends.

Mulot called the Turcos, and led the entire group of the hut to his office. The native soldiers, rifles in hands, stared as impassively as ever. The sergeant sat at his table, faced the convicts, who were lined up against the wall.

Not overbright, Mulot nevertheless cross-examined each man in turn. Borel found it easy to evade his clumsy questions.

"None of you will talk, eh?" Mulot bellowed. "We'll see!"

He went to a cupboard in the corner of the room, and procured a loop of slim cord fastened to a stick perhaps nine inches long, an instrument familiarly nicknamed a tourniquet.

The first to be chosen for the torture was a sullen, stolid fellow, who rarely spoke to any one, and was considered an idiot. The Turcos seized him, and, in spite of his struggles, strapped him to a chair.

The sergeant approached.

"I don't know anything—no—no——"

Mulot slipped the noose over his wrists. The man met the inevitable bravely. Mulot twisted the stick.

"Where is Caverlet?"

"I don't know."

Mulot continued to tighten the noose. The cord reddened. The man lunged forward with a smothered groan.

Borel instinctively started forward, but was met by the Turco's bayonet.

"Your turn will come," suggested Mulot. "One after the other. In the meanwhile, you Turcos shoot, if he moves or says anything."

Mulot twisted the cord again and again. The man, after the first plaintive groan, gritted his teeth.

"Where is Caverlet?" Mulot reiterated.

"I don't know. If I did, I wouldn't tell you——"

Another twist. The tortured man smiled. Of the two, he on the chair had the upper hand. Nothing could avail against his resolution not to speak.

Mulot struck him in the face.

"Will you speak?"

"I will be the one to speak," the voice was quiet, level, and came from the door.

Captain Duflos stood there, in the opening.

Mulot turned a greenish white. He saluted. Duflos came closer, looked at the blood-stained cord.

"Neat!" he exclaimed sarcastically. "Mulot, corporal punishment is against regulations," he added without emotion.

"He is shielding an escaped man, captain!" protested Mulot.

"And you're shielding yourself. Let him loose and have him taken to the hospital. I'll make my report later."

"But I—" Mulot stammered.

"Clear yourself at the court martial," Duflos said coldly. "I came here to look at your detachment. Have the men line up outside."

"I found that instrument here," Mulot protested. "Everybody used it."

"But you got caught."

Duflos went outside to wait for Mulot to carry out his orders. The men were summoned, and stood in line in the center of the sunbaked yard, eighty of them.

"I only need forty," Duflos said.

He marched down the line, followed by the frightened sergeant, who wrote down the numbers of the men selected.

Borel steeled himself to appear impassive. Duflos stopped in front of him. There was not even a flicker of recognition, merely an impersonal, appraising glance.

"A splendid man—I want him," the captain said, and passed on.

Even if Duflos had recognized him, he would have said the same thing. He felt no remorse, no shame. Discipline had been at stake. Discipline personified, that was Duflos. Today, the brutal spectacle of the torture had left him unmoved. He had seen, not a man suffering, but a regulation infringed.

Mulot came before the men, read off the numbers, then added—

"You will leave in three weeks, with Captain Duflos and his company."

Borel smiled. Would he go with Captain Duflos, the man who had held his fate in his hands, and wrecked him?

El Goleah would be back within two weeks— He recalled the tang of the coffee, the taste of the cakes, the "feel" of fresh clothing, the night meeting with the Tuareg.

Captain Duflos was speaking with Mulot

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now. The little sergeant was pleading. Duflos shook his head, and his reply was loud enough for all to hear—

"No. My report goes in."

Mulot, in his terror, forgot to salute, but stood staring blankly at his men, who would perhaps soon be his horses, took the reins from the Turco, vaulted into the saddle with a graceful spring, and disappeared in the direction of the barracks.

To go with Captain Duflos in three weeks.

Again, Borel smiled.

VI

CAPTAIN DUFLOS' "work-shop" was different from the rooms in the little plastered house.

Bare floors, white-washed walls, on which were posters bearing black lettered inscriptions, newly issued regulations, and a large map of northern Africa.

On the shelves were books of tactics, geography, history. The paper-weights were two small thirty-two millimeter shells for the newly manufactured light cannon.

Captain Duflos, when on duty, gathered his thoughts, marshaled them in military fashion, planned his work carefully. He had found how to save lost movement by a few minutes careful thinking. Smoking was the one luxury he permitted himself—in his office.

And so today, he lighted a cigaret.

Then he brought out, from a drawer, a sheet of foolscap, and set to work, filling in the wide lines with his vertical, precise writing. His pen creaked on the paper, each letter followed the preceding with the exactitude of a parade drill. He was writing an account of the scene he had witnessed in Mulot's office. This concluded and signed, he took from the rack a sheet of paper bearing the regimental heading, and wrote:

Third Company, Xth Regiment,
Ahamar, July 9th, 191

Major Commanding First Battalion African Light Infantry, Ain Safra, Algeria.

SIR,

1° The post of sergeant in the detachment of the Fourth Disciplinary Company stationed at Ahamar will soon be vacant. I am under orders to proceed northwest, to Sidi Bechir, with my company, and forty men of the detachment mentioned above.

2° A formal demand for a replacement sergeant will be forwarded through the usual channels, from headquarters. However, I take the liberty to make a personal demand for a trustworthy man, brave, and a strict disciplinarian.

At the bottom he signed neatly—

Duflos, Captain.

"I don't want another Mulot," he muttered, as he sealed the envelop, and rang the brass bell on the desk.

The orderly entered, with precisely the mechanical aspect of a cuckoo springing from his clock.

"Put this in the mail for Ain Safra," he ordered.

After the man had left, he reached out to the book-shelf, and took up a recently compiled set of lectures, by an officer teaching in the *École Polytechnique*, Ferdinand Foch.

He fingered the pages.

"Marengo, Marmont battery," he read, then laid the book down. "Not much use where I am going," he thought.

He could imagine the lonely spot on the north side of In Renel, near the Moroccan Border, where he would soon be stationed. The border tribes had become turbulent, and were renewing their raids on the French Oases. Furthermore, the Tuareg, who had been ominously quiet for some years, were again on the rampage. Daily protests from despoiled merchants were coming into the Government Office in Algiers.

Many years ago, a holy man, called Hadj-el-Bechir, had traveled that northern region, earning his living telling others how to live. After his death, grateful followers erected him a tomb—a marabout. Marabout may mean either holy man or the tomb of a holy man. Around this marabout, Duflos and his men were to make camp, build an outpost.

Beside his infantrymen, he would have forty men from the disciplinary company, ten native soldiers, and a detachment of Spahis. A merry life indeed, with the fleas, smells, poor food, and constant watch for raids.

"The path of glory," he muttered, glancing at the map, and visualizing the miles of hot sand to be crossed.

VII

TWO weeks later, the stage-coach pulled in at the Ahamar station. Sergeant Criquet alighted, glanced at his watch.

"Trifle late," he remarked.

"Four hours," the driver remarked. "We were due in at six."

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Criquet shook hands with him good-humoredly.

"Well, we can't always do the things the way we want them. Where are the barracks?"

The driver pointed with his whip.

"Over there, you can ask the patrols as you go through the streets. Good night, sergeant."

"Good night," Criquet replied.

Then he went to the side door of the coach and threw it open.

"Come on, we've arrived."

Three men got out, two in the fatigue uniform of the light infantry, the third a gendarme, with glistening silver braid across his tunic breast.

"Well, Frog Head—and you, Desmard—have you enjoyed your little excursion?" Criquet asked humorously.

Neither answered.

The gendarme yawned sleepily.

"Late—" he said. "Better get these birds in a cage, so we can hit the hay."

"Right," agreed Criquet, and took the lead.

He was elated. A few days before, the major commanding had called him to his office.

"Eh, Criquet, would you like a change?"

"All depends, major."

The major handed him a letter just received from Captain Duflos.

"A nice post, Criquet," he said. "You'll be your own boss. Duflos has the reputation of being easy to get along with, if one attends to the job. Outside duty, he never bothers one."

"Where is he going?" Criquet had asked him.

"Sidi Bechir, in the desert. Good chance for promotion. Wouldn't be surprized if you returned to get your second lieutenant's stripe."

"I'll take the post, sir."

"Good. Mulot is to be reduced to the ranks soon. Allowed a man to escape. Didn't report it at first. Fishy business altogether. When you get to Ahamar, take immediate charge until you leave for Sidi Bechir. By the way, you can take with you the two men, Desmard and that Apache."

Criquet had smiled.

Frog Head and Desmard had recently been condemned to the disciplinary company. Frog Head for disrespectful language, Desmard for repeated neglect of equipment. Time after time, he had come out for drill minus the buttons of his tunic, and with broken shoe-laces. Criquet, mindful of the help Desmard had been to him in the Borel affair, had passed by, until, one day, at battalion drill, the private had appeared without a belt. Criquet knew that this was the squad's revenge because he had testified against a pal. But the result was the same. He was forced to report him.

And so, four days ago, he had started with his charges.

And here he was, ready to take over his duties. Wouldn't Mulot be surprized? From all reports, the little man was pretty lax on the discipline end of his job. Well, things would snap up now that he, Criquet, was here.

"Where's the place?" the gendarme asked.

"Don't know. Never been here before."

Criquet turned to Frog Head, whom he knew had served a term in Ahamar.

"Where's the company camp?"

"I ain't tired," Frog Head replied intrepidly. "And anyway, I don't remember. Them things change all the time. First, it's at one end of the town, then the other."

"All right—all right," Criquet stopped him. "You don't know."

Frog Head quieted down.

A man was coming down the street, toward them. Criquet approached him, tipped his cap.

"Could you tell me where the disciplinary company is stationed, sir?"

The man looked at him, started.

"Yes," he replied, in a low voice. "Straight ahead, then turn to the left."

Criquet knew that voice, he had heard it somewhere before. He looked closer, but in the obscurity he could not make out the features. Bah, some trader from a garrison town where he had been stationed. Or perhaps, an illusion.

"Thank you," he said, then to the others—

"Come on."

The stranger stood against the wall of the nearest house, to allow the party to pass on down the street. Criquet heard an exclamation from Frog Head.

"What's the matter?" he asked, turning.

"Hole in my shoe—rocks," briefly explained the Apache.

"That's a bad combination," Criquet agreed.

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They came to the end of the street. To the left, a cluster of low buildings—the camp, probably.

The Turco on guard directed them to the sergeant's hut, standing next to the office. Criquet knocked at the door. For a space, no one answered, then a sleepy voice called out—

"Who is there?"

"A sergeant and two prisoners."

A ray of light filtered under the door, which soon swung open. Mulot, in his nightshirt, his skinny legs protruding, was revealed.

"What's the meaning of this, disturbing me at this time of night?"

"Can't let my men sleep in the open, can I?" Criquet demanded ironically.

"Wait a minute."

Mulot disappeared, but was soon back wearing trousers and shoes, and carrying a lantern.

"I'll take you to the guard-house where these gentlemen can be accommodated."

At the guard-house, Desmard and Frog Head were locked in. The gendarme, after inquiring where he was to spend the night, left for the barracks.

"Aren't you going with him?" Mulot asked.

"No, I want to call the roll."

"What do you mean! The last roll-call was at nine," Mulot said indignantly. "And the next is at five in the morning, and what have you got to do with it, anyway? I'm in charge here."

Criquet quietly reached into his breast-pocket, beneath his coat, and drew out his papers.

"Here," he offered. "My orders to take charge of this detachment. Signed by the major as you see."

"Can't you wait until morning?" Mulot asked in quavering tones. "Why disturb the men in their sleep?"

"The poor darlings!" Criquet returned in mock sympathy. "It's dreadful, but necessary."

He waited until Mulot had donned his tunic and cap. Then they stepped to the first hut, and entered. The men were asleep, sprawled on the mattresses.

"Phew, what a stink!" said Criquet, then stirred the nearest man with his toe.

"Get up, all of you!" he bellowed.

Heads went up, grunts, yawns, exclamations. At sight of the brass buttons glinting in the lantern light, they came to attention, still dazed from sleep. Criquet was satisfied. He knew the value of his move. The men, still confused, would see him by lantern-light. He would be wide awake and collected. By contrast, they would feel weak. And, it would give him the upper hand for all time. When they felt tempted to revolt, they would think of him as the calm man of the first night, and resolution would be sapped. Without being aware of it Criquet was a psychologist.

Mulot handed him the roll. Criquet shouted the names, and, as each man answered, stared hard at him, until the fellow's eyes lowered. Another trick that worked. In his seven years as sergeant only three men had failed to lower their eyes at the first meeting. Two were dead, one a suicide, the other shot for attempted murder. The third was Borel.

When all had been stared down in this fashion, Criquet cleared his throat, struck an attitude.

"Listen," he began. "I am in charge from tonight on. Watch out. One false move, and bing!"

With his hand he delivered a cutting blow into the air.

"My name's Criquet, and you'll know me before you get through. There will be, to begin with, a cleaning out of this place—tonight, immediately! After that, you can go back to sleep and have sweet dreams."

From hut to hut, the two went.

"Listen, Mulot, and watch me," Criquet said. "And when you get promoted back, act like me. That's the only way. They're wolves, every one of them, and you have to growl aloud to make yourself heard."

"But you can't punish them except after court martial," Mulot said. "I tried, and got into trouble."

"Do it on the quiet—get a pretext—that's the way."

Criquet recognized one or two men whom he had personally caused to be sent down. He was amused by their evidence of fear, when they realized they were back in his charge. These men knew, and were afraid. Others would be afraid in their turn. He had a reputation to keep up. By tomorrow night, the detachment would run like clockwork.

They entered the last hut.

Criquet looked at the list—

"Acard," he called out.

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"Present."

"Borel."

Criquet peered around for his former "goat." No answer had come to the first call.

"Borel," he repeated. "Come, let us gaze upon your handsome self."

Still no answer.

The men turned around and stared into the dark corners. Criquet caught sight of Mulot, who had turned ashy white.

"Has Borel been transferred to another hut?" he asked.

"No," Mulot replied. Then he addressed the men—

"When did you last see him?"

"About nine, when we went to sleep."

"He was right here, on his mattress!"

Criquet suddenly recalled the civilian who has given him the direction of the camp. Could it be possible that Borel had slipped out of the shack, procured the clothes! Yes, he might have stolen them. Frog Head had recognized him.

Mulot was running about in his agitation, searching outside for traces, half-mad with his fright.

"We'll take the Turcos," he said, "and search the town. He left only an hour ago, at the outside. He can't have gone far——"

Criquet grinned.

"Don't get excited. I'll take charge."

He knew that Borel could not get far before morning. Why not let him have the fun of thinking himself free? It would be amusing to watch his face when he found himself caught. He would search the town in the morning, go to the native quarters where all fugitives hid. He would know how to find him. He had had experience.

"But it's the second," babbled Mulot. "And I'll be punished!"

"Don't worry, old man," Criquet said, with a lordly gesture. "I take the responsibility. Borel is the one who will be punished, when he is caught. Don't worry, old man."

VIII

IN A corner of Kaouadji Ali's café, a dull-eyed Arab, pipe in hand, lay stretched on the straw mats. He looked up at Borel with listless eyes, as from a long distance.

Caverlet had not yet arrived.

Borel relighted his cigaret parsimoniously, knowing the value of tobacco. He glanced down at his hands, repressed a shudder. Bruised fingers, broken nails, raw patches of flesh where the rock chips had struck, contrasting with the clean cuff of his shirt.

"Every digit a poem," he thought.

Caverlet's hands had been like that. So were those of his companions, a mark more conspicuous than the old brand, formerly burned into convicts' shoulders.

The door opened, and two Tuareg stood in the entrance. Borel stepped forward, glanced from one to the other, puzzled. There was a light laugh, and the taller of the two raised his veil.

"Hello, old man!"

The change in Caverlet was startling. There was a breeziness in his manner, a cool, resolute bearing, in contrast with his former sullenness. Truly, El Goleah had gone back to his own.

Borel, choked with emotion, gripped the hand offered, silently.

The two sat down together, Caverlet's companion squatted by the side of the Arab, lighted a pipe, and sought the paradise of *kief*, where light-footed houris dance.

"How do you find it?"

"I have started anew. I'm a Targui."

Borel knew that Caverlet spoke the truth. The restlessness had disappeared. There was a certain aloof poise and calm about him. He was as stolid as his companion. His, voice, when it rose, did not have the angry ring of the European in heated argument. A certain clipped speech crept into his French, as though he were cadencing the words to Tamashek rhythm. Yes, he was Amenoukal of the Ahagars! A Targui who read Verlaine and Baudelaire!

"Don't worry about feeling lonesome in the desert," Caverlet went on. "You won't want anything else after you have spent a few months on the sand. My father, I have to tell you, could not keep away. When age overtook him, when his health failed him, he sought the desert, where he had been freer as a captive than in France as a free man. He died in Ouagla, some years ago, trying to make his way back to the Ahagars."

"But——"

"I know. I have been through the same struggle. I have stood alone in the darkness, and battled with myself. To be a Frenchman and break rock for one's

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country, or to be just a free man. You know you are tired of slavery, that you want to come with me."

Temptation whispered to Borel with the alluring logic it can assume, when bent upon making one do the wrong thing.

"We would leave tonight?" he asked.

"Immediately."

There came a long pause.

"It is deserting."

"What of it?"

"I am French—a soldier."

"You can be a Targui."

Borel looked at his friend thoughtfully.

"In a few years here, I shall be free. I can go back to France, start over again."

"Start over again! Why? To become an officer, such as Duflos? Is that achievement?" Caverlet laughed. "How did he get his cross? A tribe, angered at the French for dispossessing them of their land, which they had held for centuries, rebelled. Duflos was sent down, with his company.

"The Arabs' guns were muzzle-loaders. His men were armed with Lebels. He drew them into line before the village, opened fire, then charged with the bayonet. There were women in that camp. Did none of them meet with a half-mad Tirailleur? Duflos' decoration is red—red with blood. The Tuareg take booty. Duflos took land. One is piracy, the other the advancement of civilization."

Caverlet lowered his voice, persuasively. "Think—with me, there is the possibility of revenge. You can get Duflos."

"Duflos!"

"Yes. You may get him over the sight of your gun some day. Together, we will marshal my men, weld the warriors into an aggregation such as has never been seen in the Sahara. You with your infantry training, I with my knowledge of cavalry tactics. We have as much brain, without complimenting ourselves, as the average colonial army officer. We are young, we have daring——"

"You would turn against the French?"

"A door must be either open or shut," El Goleah said.

Borel rose angrily.

El Goleah intercepted him, gripped his wrist in an iron clasp.

"Hold on—what's the matter?"

"A deserter is bad enough, but a traitor!"

Others have done it before us," El Goleah resumed. "Sit down, and listen——"

The *kief* smoker in his corner lazily curled himself, and went to sleep again, after having made a vain attempt to follow the conversation in swift French. The Targui looked on calmly, his eyes roving from one face to the other.

Borel obeyed, struggling to control his rising anger.

"In 1789," Caverlet begin, "during the Revolution, Frenchmen fought against Frenchmen. The nobles emigrated, enlisted in foreign armies. Colonists have fought their mother country before today. It is not new, not shameful for a man to serve his own interest. The Connetable de Bourbon, during the reign of Francis I, King of France, turned his sword against his country."

"But that was before France was whole—solid."

"Take a more recent instance, not a hundred years old. Bernadotte, Marshal of France, became Prince Regent of Sweden. In the interest of his adopted country, he led the army of his kingdom against his compatriots. He struck at Napoleon I. The troops that dealt the French armies the finishing blow at Leipsig in 1813, were his. There are precedents, as you see."

"—— precedents, Caverlet!"

"Right. —— precedents, and let us be ourselves, without fear, or wish for justification. We both have griefs against France. Let us even up the score."

"A son does not strike his father because he is unjustly punished by him," pointed out Borel.

"Not in France. Conservative rules keep him from doing so. Other places, other ethics."

"And you would turn your men against the troops?"

"Why should we pity them? They are intruders, have no right here. Has a single one been born in this country? No, they are brought here, not always with their consent, made to fight for powerful financial interests."

Borel thought an instant, puffed tiny billows of smoke, then, having regained his calm, spoke:

"Your theory does not stand the test. It is again the great question—utility to the millions at the price of inconvenience to thousands. In the trend of events, Africa logically belongs to the European powers. Why? A law immutable as nature itself.

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Europe, France, are teeming with millions, in need of material found in Africa.

"The population of this continent, which rolls from Algiers to Capetown, from Dakar to the Indian Ocean, is backward, indolent, does not exploit the land. The country of the Tuareg stands between Algeria and the Soudan. It must, unavoidably, be held by the French. If the road to the Soudan is cleared of the raiding nomads, the immense, fertile inner belt of the so called Dark Continent will be worked, prosper, under the impulsion of growing commerce.

"The railroads will ultimately link Algiers with Timbuctoo, then cross to Bamako, and there join the other systems, from the Guinea, Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Dahomey. This will transform the scattered French possessions into a homogeneous whole."

"And, do you consider it right to despoil weaker people to attain this?"

"Take North America. It was wrested from the red Indians. And yet, is it not better that cities like New York, Chicago, should have mushroomed from the virgin soil, harboring millions of thriving people, rather than allowing the rightful owners to continue their petty warfare, their hunting and puerile mode of living?"

"No."

"You are unfortunately, in the minority," smiled Borel.

"As a Targui, I can not take the interest of others into consideration. I must gain them years of freedom, postpone the end, earn for them a respite from annihilation."

El Goleah at last lost his calm, his eyes glinted, his lips twitched.

"As for you, Borel, you speak like a textbook. You have no blood in your veins but milk—thin milk. Stay on the rock-pile, that's where you belong. We want men of energy in the desert!"

Borel arose quietly, faced Armand.

"You are right, Armand, I do nôt belong there. I understand your ideals. Understand mine."

Caverlet offered his hand.

Borel gripped the proffered fingers.

"I know you won't carry out your threats. Your hand would wither, should it raise against the French."

"Sentimentality," scoffed El Goleah.

"No, Armand. The commonplace, worn sentiments of loyalty to country, of devotion to kin, are still the roots of a man. Farewell."

He left hurriedly.

BOREL gained the street, knowing how he came there loved Armand as a brother, interview had hurt him. Poor Arm joke of Fate—a man with two souls!

He started toward the camp.

Then, he recalled Criquet. Wh the sergeant doing in Ahamar? Pe see Frog-Head personally into the ca He was capable of taking leave in c prolong the torture of a man he d Bah—he would know in the morn

Borel walked rapidly, until he came first sentry, who had allowed him t earlier in the evening.

"Who goes there?" the Turco cha

"Hush up, you fool," Borel whi "It's me."

The Turco leaned close.

"*Sidi*, they have found thee gone do not halt thee now, I am lost, an art caught just the same."

For a brief moment, Borel was to make a break for town, gain the house, and get away with Caverlet a man. But, he reasoned, if he were sued, they might be endangered. An was not time to fail in his good reso This indeed was the test. He had come of his own will, and he must face the

"Very well, call," he told the sen

"The 'Imouhars,' they will not sha

"Be at peace."

The Turco called out, then brough rifle to bear on Borel.

A light approached rapidly, sendi dancing rays in swiftly shifting circles

"What's up?"

Borel recognized Criquet's voice.

"It is I, Criquet."

"Oh, it is?"

Criquet lifted the lantern.

"Well, Borel, this is a pleasure!"

He led the way to the guard-h Within, on the inclined plank which s as a bed, lay two men. They s awakened by the sound of voices. B recognized Desmard and Frog Head.

"Hello!" bellowed the former Apa

"Keep your effusions until tomor Criquet said roughly.

Mulot appeared, to inquire into the of the tumult.

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he Turcos stood by the door.
Got a rope?" Criquet asked.
Yes."
Mulot dived into the next cell, and came
k with a length of stout cord.
I'll tie you up for safe-keeping until
ning," Criquet said with a grin.
He's going to frog you!" the Apache
ated.
You keep still, or I'll tie you up too,"
quet threatened.
Borel whitened.
He knew what frogging meant, the wrists
l behind one's back, the ankles fastened
ether, and drawn up to meet the hands.
e position, painful at the start, with
h second grew in discomfort, until a
n would scream from the terrific strain.
"Tortures are not in the regulations,"
ulot remarked.
"Is it our little Mulot?" Criquet scoffed.
have a right to tie a would-be deserter to
ep him from temptation—I—what's
at?"
From the barracks came a bugle call, the
rm.
Then a vague murmur of voices, the
tle of arms. A detachment was evi-
ntly gathering.
"Sergeant! Sergeant!" some one called
tside, and suddenly, Duflos appeared in
e doorway. He wore his service uniform.
hind him stood the regimental sergeant,
e chin-strap holding the helmet tightly
his head, his round face glowing with
citement.
"Has Sergeant Criquet arrived?" Duflos
ked of Mulot.
Criquet brought his heels together,
luted.
"Present, Sir."
"Good. You arrived just in time. The
hole border is ablaze. We are ordered to
idi Bechir immediately. Mulot will pro-
ide you with the list of men I wish to
ake. Get them ready to start in thirty
inutes."
"Captain," Mulot put in. "What about
orel? He is on the list, but he was caught
rying to escape."
"Won't have a chance where we're going.
need every able-bodied man. Send him
long."
"I have brought two prisoners from Ain
Safra in whom I am interested," Criquet
said. "May I take them, too?"
"Yes," Duflos answered shortly.

He remounted, and disappeared into the night.

Criquet immediately called out the men, who packed up quickly, and drew into line on the camp parade-ground.

"Forward—march!"

The detachment, set in motion, progressed toward the barracks, arriving in time to join the two hundred and fifty men in Duflos' company. There was no further delay.

The expedition crossed the town, their footsteps echoing in the silent streets, and started on the long march. Camels would be provided later, the first lap of the journey to be covered on foot.

Borel saw the tense faces of the soldiers, the anxious handling of the rifles. The border ablaze! And here he was, a laborer, judged unworthy to shoulder a gun. Fighting to be done, and he out of it! He would wield a shovel, while others shed their blood.

Frog Head marched at his side.

"Scared stiff," he remarked to Borel, indicating the infantry of Duflos' company.

"First expedition. Newly arrived men. Soft—but with good hearts. They'll fight as best as they know. A man can always get killed."

"But there's a right and wrong way of doing it," Frog Head replied. Then softly: "I ain't much of a patriot, but I'd give a lot to be in with them. Yes—I'd even kiss Criquet."

IX

THE marabout of Sidi Bechir is a rectangular structure squatting down in a depression of sand, composed of an enclosing wall, ten feet high, a central building in which the holy man is buried, and a diminutive minaret, jutting but a few feet above the crest of the enclosure.

Captain Duflos ordered loopholes pierced through the walls, at intervals of six feet, and spaces for spare cartridges in the mud of the wall. On the platform of the minaret, he installed his single machine-gun, a slim, elegant St. Etienne, with all the beauty of that weapon, and all the weaknesses. More precise, firing more shots to the minute than other guns, it nevertheless was easily out of order. A work of art, a jewel, composed of many parts, Duflos found himself wishing for the compact, simpler Maxim, which did

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not have the appearance, but which could be repaired swiftly, even under fire.

He quartered his own men within the yard, the laborers being assigned to the northeast corner, under guard of the Turcos. Another unpleasant episode—the promised Spahis had not materialized. They were said to be on the way from Ain Safra. Duflos and his men were forced to do the scouting.

A little engineer sergeant detached to the expedition from the central battalion in Oran, bored for water, successfully. The jet shot several feet into the air, to the joy of the troopers, who were now sure of not going thirsty.

On the third day, the native traders began to appear out of the desert. They came in groups of two or three, their belongings loaded on mangy camels and asses. Their tents were pitched a few hundred yards outside the walls of the marabout. More and more came, until a genuine village was formed. The women trooped for water at dusk, and were permitted to fill their receptacles. A caravan from Morocco arrived. The leader demanded permission to seek shelter until conditions should settle somewhat. He had met a group of raiders, had had a sharp brush with them, losing a few men, and several pack-camels.

Duflos called him to his tent, and questioned him. The man, a dusky trader from Fez, with the face of a friendly pirate, was eager to speak of the dangers he had encountered. Duflos had no difficulty in leading him into conversation.

"What tribe did they belong to?"

"The Ouled Sidi Cheicks."

"Nonsense. They have been pacified forty years."

"Peace can always be broken, *sidi capitaine;* the old men shake their heads, won't attack. But who can keep the young men quiet?"

Duflos knew of the unrest among the younger generation, fired by tales of the older men, who had fought the French during the conquest.

"And from as far away as the Rif have some riders come. There is talk of the Tuareg joining, in an attempt to wipe you out."

Duflos was disturbed. If the Tuareg united with the northern tribes, the situation would be serious.

A WEEK later, a caravan appeared to the north, headed straight for the marabout, for the tiny tri-color. Puffs of smoke dotted the long procession, and the faint detonations came across the distance.

Duflos called out a hundred men, immediately moved forward to meet the fleeing party. His men formed a skirmish-line, opened fire, while the caravan passed, then closed ranks to present a firm front to the raiders. Duflos knew that irregular cavalry had no chance against his well-organized infantry. But the riders had to find out for themselves. They came nearer, never halting their headlong pursuit, straight at the troops who had formed a triangle, the point facing the enemy.

Duflos spoke briefly to the sergeant at his elbow.

"Sight — one hundred and fifty meters——"

"Fire!"

The Lebels crackled. The first of the riders went down. Cheered by the sight, the troopers shouted, and worked like mad, reloading, firing. The rifles of the Arabs were not powerful enough to be effective at long range, and they finally drew off. Duflos marched his men back to the marabout. The raiders, instead of disappearing, hovered about the camp. That night, sentries were doubled.

In the morning, the enemy had gone.

Duflos, alone in his tent, relaxed for the first time. The first brush had been a success. He had been afraid of the result, commanding men, ninety-five percent. of whom had never been under fire. Up to this moment, during the trip and the first week, he had been occupied with his work. The hard part of his mission was now before him, to sit down and wait for events.

His books had been left in Ahamar. In the precipitation of the departure, his orderly had not thought to bring them along. He had nothing in common with the stolid troopers under his command, the quiet little fellows who could rise to heights of heroism. He liked them, not as men, but as fine specimens of a breed. To him, a good soldier was as a beautiful horse, to be admired, to be prized, but not to be loved deeply.

What would rising in the army mean to him? More pay? He had everything he wanted with his actual position. Power?

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What pride in having power over mental inferiors? He longed for vague things—for art. He wanted to express himself and the sword was not his medium. He was a good officer, better than most, better than any he knew. But what did that mean? A victory over half-barbaric Arabs did not allay his longing, his thirst for undefinable sensation. Duflos was half-mad with the struggle against his thoughts.

He left the tent, walking in the blazing sunlight, around the marabout yard, down to the native village. The beauty of the scenery, the raw coloring, the intensity of every detail lulled within him his sense of dissatisfaction. The Arab tents were cluttered with humanity, smelly, noisy. Other arrivals had swelled the population. The troopers off duty strolled to the tiny stands, bought dates, fruits, queer native objects. A group of them, squatted on mats, watched an Arab girl dancing, as only women of her race can dance. They laughed and joked. Duflos envied their animal satisfaction, though their coarseness made him wince.

What would be his fate, he wondered. Would *he* ever attain satisfaction? Probably, in some stupid engagement or other, a stray bullet would find him, and he would be dragged lifeless on the sand by his frightened horse. He had once seen a young man, an artist of no mean talent, dragged in this manner.

And he had laughed. It was absurd, a mind, a talent that could have given the world beauty, killed by a missile made by a savage armorer. Darkness destroying Light. Incongruously enough, he had picked out of the man's pocket, sketches of the desert, the moonlight on the dunes, the mosques, with their riot of coloring in the sun. He had stared breathlessly at the dead genius, stopped in his twenties, to prevent a few carpets and bales of merchandise from changing hands.

He too had been born, brought up, given an education, inspiration, and would vegetate in the wilds.

Thinking, thinking, Duflos left camp, reached the crest of the dunes, and sat down. He contemplated the immensity of sky and sand, mocking and elusive, beautiful and horrible. Was full and complete happiness attainable, should a man grasp at the things within his reach instead of striving for that which is forever out of reach? And if one obtained one's wish, what? Satiation, the end. Then the thirst for something new, the renewal of the heart-breaking climb toward the non-existing summit. In the desert, the thirsty wayfarer visualizes what he desires most, turns dreary horizons into immense oases.

The loneliness of the crowd—here he was, with hundreds of human beings, shaped as himself, speaking the same tongue, and as alone as if he had come by himself to Sidi Bechir, his only distraction or relief the organization of a piffling fort, or a ludicrous game of chess with the lieutenant.

Most men were easily satisfied, took their simple pleasures, accepted their sorrows, and smiled at the burdening sky. Others, as himself searched endlessly. Why should he go on searching? Why not submerge his second personality that loved beauty into the other, the soldier? Why not be content with doing one's duty well, a game of cards at night, and going to bed, soul empty, heart satisfied?

Why not live in a physical world as a physical being? Could he not go back to camp now, say something to the troopers, make them say of him—

"Not only is he just, but he is kind.

Why not use as an outlet for energy the will to do one's job, lose oneself in altruism, the mawkish, maudlin altruism that consists of examining the trooper's feet after each march, of compelling them to wash. Or pick out the sulky fellows and bring them back to the fold.

He had a convict detachment along. Why not elevate the brutalized men to the level of others? He laughed. Yes, bring a speck of dust to the level of another.

Men, troopers, universe, and himself with a gnawing at his heart.

He took off his helmet, then thinking of the ardent sun, replaced it. Self-preservation, another rule, stronger than all the others. He had just decided that the universe was empty of sensation for him, and yet did not wish to depart. No, he was afraid of sunstroke. One person gone out of millions, of supreme unimportance to the millions, of supreme importance to the one.

The *gosbas* were playing. *Gosbas*, music, a form of hypnosis used by men to get away from the common place. He had seen a soldier, mortally wounded, beg for water to prolong his life—and his suffering. All to stay here——

He rose to return to camp.

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Camels squealed. The men shouted. There were shrill laughs from the women, who trod heavily veiled in and out of the groups of soldiers, coyly replying with glances to the rough compliments paid them aloud. The smell was choking. The sand danced in the sunlight, in golden tenuous pattern. And all there were glad to be alive. He answered the salutes of the privates, briefly and mechanically, and made his way toward the gate of the marabout.

The Arab women were coming for water, filing by softly. Women these, but treated as they should be. To the Moslem, the woman has no soul, but is merely a completion of man, a part of him. And, in more civilized nations, others were coming back to the creed. Had not a celebrated philosopher said—

"Women are made for the continuation of the race and the relaxation of the warrior?"

This ponderous piece of wisdom, laughed at in the hectic atmosphere of the Parisian salons, by neurotic women, fanning themselves with feather fans, smoking, drinking, might indeed be the solution. When admiration for the virile, the strong, give place to deification of soft grace, a race is gone.

He found his lieutenant waiting near his tent, the chessboard ready. Bah, one must occupy oneself as well as possible—while away the time.

He moved the first pawn, took the first drink of absinthe.

The glowing sun shone on the sentries' bayonets, flashed into the azure sky.

X

TWELVE miles away, the same red sun shone on other blades.

"Greetings, El Goleah!"

"Greetings."

Amenoukal El Goleah, Chief of the Ahagars, received in audience for the first time the chiefs of the other Tuareg tribes. Six in number, gravely seated in a semicircle before him, they seemed to have conscience of the gravity of the situation, and waited for him to speak. From his seat on the divan, Caverlet examined his guests. Taghamas, the dusky Koullonirs from the Ghat, all the principal tribes were represented in the group before him.

"What is your wish?" he asked.

"That our words be understood properly, Amenoukal, thou must know the situation," the one chosen as speaker began. "Art thou still French, or genuinely Targui?"

"Even as you see me, I am Targui," Armand responded quietly.

"And then, we may take it, thou hast not come to help the French?"

"No."

"It is well. It would not be seemly for the bravest of the Tuareg, the noble Ahagars, to turn against their brethren."

"It would not," Armand assented.

"Neither can they stay by, and watch, sword in sheath, the people of the desert fight the common enemy—the Roumis——"

"Why not?"

"Ask thy men if such is their wish," the chief replied.

"Come to the point. What is it you wish me to do?" insisted Armand.

"For the first time in many years we have made peace with the Arab tribes of the border. They are one with us. Together, we will challenge the Roumis. The Algerian tribes to the northeast are still quiet, but the younger men are already armed, and waiting for our first success to hurry to our aid. At Sidi Bechir, two hours ride from here, the Roumis have made camp. They intend to build a strong fort, to which the caravans may come for shelter, and the Government soldiers can use for a starting-point for punishing expeditions on our *douars*. It is an insult cast in our teeth."

There came a mutter of agreement from all present.

"We have decided to attack the post, before the new walls are erected, crush the detachment completely. We are strong enough to do it. From as far away as central Morocco, men have come. We have entered into parley with them——"

"So that there is to be an open attack against the French?" El Goleah asked.

"Yes," the chief nodded. "Matters must come to a head sooner or later. This is the time. He who looks at the obstacle too long fails in the leap. Should Sidi Bechir fall—and it will—it would encourage the tribes that are still wavering, precipitate a rebellion of the French subjects. Years of freedom will be gained us, while the Roumis put down the uprising in their territory. At one stroke, we put both the French and the Arabs out of the way, and the rich caravans are ours!"

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"If you should fail——"

"Men can no more than die," the chief answered. "Thou wilt not refuse——"

"Why should I refuse?" Armand asked.

"It is well-known among us that thy father was of Roumi blood. When we saw thee, with thy warriors, coming near to Sidi Bechir, we thought perhaps you had come to help them."

"Be at peace. I have not come to help them."

"But neutrality is not for such as thee," the chief resumed.

"Why not?"

"Because a blade must be either in the scabbard or out," he pronounced sententiously. "And we would know what thy position is, from thy own lips."

"If I refuse to fight by thy side?"

"Then thou art not a Targui, and thy men will know this for a fact, that the Roumi blood is strongest in thee——"

"Watch thy tongue!" Armand warned.

"Man can no more than die!" repeated the chief. "And a blow from a sword does not kill the truth!"

Again came the murmur of assent.

"My men will do as I order," Armand replied.

"But what will they say if thou makest them stay behind? What will they say when we come back, and are hailed as they who fought, victorious in a battle in which they will have had no part. When they ride in the desert, our very children will call out, not 'Ahagars' as formerly, but jackals, who slunk while lions fought!"

"Are you the lions?" Armand demanded smilingly.

"Men shall so call us."

"And therefore, I can not refuse?"

"No. Unless it is thy wish that all should say, 'The Ahagars need a shepherd, not an Amenoukal.' "

Armand realized that if he held back from the coming battle he would be reproached forever. His last scruple left.

"Very well," he agreed. "I am with you."

He shook hands in turn with each of the emissaries of the tribes.

"How many men have we?"

The speaker counted on his fingers, mumbling, then replied:

"The Arabs have four hundred warriors. We Tuareg have four hundred more, and thou hast three hundred. That makes over one thousand, does it not?"

"It does. And how many French are there in Sidi Bechir?"

"One white officer, several of lesser rank, two hundred and forty-six privates, a detachment of laborers forty-seven strong, and ten Turcos."

"Do you hope to take the outpost against all these rifles?"

"Oh, we have planned the thing well, El Goleah. The camp is within the walls, but they come out to drill. A party of Arabs will ride between them and the marabout, cutting their forces in two, and boxing up the leader within the walls. While the horsemen are attacking the infantry in the open, the Arabs, dismounted, together with our men, will scale the walls. The laborers have no weapons. There will be left, within the marabout, only the ten Turcos watching them. Without their chief, alone in the open, how long will the soldiers last?"

"What are they?"

"Young soldiers. Were they the men from Sidi Bel Abbes, it would be different."

Armand joined in the general amusement. Yes, if the garrison of the marabout had been composed of the Foreign Legion, no attack would have been made. But youngsters, fresh from farms and shops of peaceful France—bah! Even that marvel of discipline, Duflos, could not make veterans of them overnight.

"I must warn you," Armand resumed, "that to fight against France means a great deal of trouble later on. I have been with them and I know."

"You mean the long rifles? The regiments of soldiers?" The chief snorted his disgust. "We have to oppose them three foes—the desert, the sun, thirst. And how are they going to reach us, when we move like fish in water?"

Armand saw the truth of the argument. While the Arab tribes would certainly be punished, the Tuareg were safe, except for the risks of actual battle. Their villages could be moved at will into the farthest reaches of the desert, moved always a hundred miles away from the nearest French column, which would grope in vain for them, as a blind man seeking the proverbial needle in the haystack.

"But *mehara* are not beasts for battle of this sort," Armand suggested. "We need horses."

"This also has been foreseen. Come."

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The chief led the way from the tent into the outskirts of the camp. A herd of horses was gathered there, guarded by a few Ouled Sidi Cheicks, from the Moroccan branch of the tribe.

"These were brought for thee—and thy men. After the attack, in payment for thy assistance, they will be thine."

They were beautiful animals. Armand's eyes glistened with pleasure. The one especially presented to him was saddled, and he mounted immediately.

"Nobler than the *mehara*," he remarked, laughing.

One of his men left, but came hurrying back with a sword which he lifted toward Armand, a long straight blade, narrower and lighter than the usual Targui weapon. Armand seized it eagerly, felt the grip which fitted into his hand perfectly.

"Ikerouk's sword," the man informed him.

A surge of pride flooded to Armand's heart. Ikerouk's sword, the gleaming blade that had flashed in a hundred encounters, legendary in the desert! He recalled riding on raids with his uncle. The Amenoukal had driven his *mehari* several yards in the lead of the front of attack, and struck the first blow.

"Give the men their mounts!" he ordered.

The warriors, who had clustered about, shouted like children. The Targui, though more used to the *mehari*, is nevertheless a good rider. They draw up into line. As Armand contemplated them, the background of desert and tents, a savage exultation rose within him. His men! Strong, tall, well-knit, with the courage and impetuosity of the Arab joined to the more stolid qualities of the Berbers. In battle with trained cavalry, they would be at a disadvantage through their lack of organization, but against scattered infantry, what a performance they could give!

The setting sun dyed all with floods of red. The camp appeared to be bathed in blood.

The sense of power grew in Armand, the satisfaction of the weapon in his hand. Beside these warriors, in the far-away *douars* of the tribe, were others. He could summon, within two weeks, over one thousand of Ahagars. He could make law in the desert. A far cry, from Spahis sergeant to Amenoukal! And yet, he had hesitated long before taking the step!

He galloped his horse up and down the line of his men, then brought him straight before them, saluted with his blade. In answer, broad swords were flourished, and a shout of, "El Goleah!" went up from a hundred chests.

"Men—warriors," he called out in his sonorous, metallic voice. "This blade will not be sheathed until we are once more masters of the border. After the Roumis, the Arabs. And the name of the Tuareg will take on a new meaning, resound fear inspiring from Algeria to the Soudan. Once again all will bow before 'Hall el Littram'—the veiled Men!"

"El Goleah!"

"I have come back to you from afar. I am yours. Together, let us fight and win."

"Fight and win!" repeated the warriors.

"Let us meet the sword with the sword. The rifle with the rifle, protect what was given us by Allah, or by that god which preceded Allah in your hearts!"

"Fight and win," rolled the answering shout.

"In the coming battle, some of us will fall. But they who survive will go back to the villages, and tell the old men that we have regained what they lost—that the young have risen, and will better the deeds of the old. That the breed is not going to seed, that the Imoshars are still the lords of the sand!"

"We are the Imoshars!"

"And let your prayers rise, not to Allah or to another, but to our own good arms, which are more potent than the prayer beads of ten marabouts!"

El Goleah ended his speech. Transplanted, taken from a wild life into oppressive civilization, he was falling back into his ways. At last, he was what he had longed to be—a Targui. These people had given him a throne. To whom should his loyalty go? Sheer belly gratitude should make him an Ahagar. Some might say that he, with French blood in his veins, was a traitor. Let them. His birth had not been of his choice. The blood of the desert was more virile, and had burned out the other.

The chief of the Targui delegation approached him.

"Of all of us, thou hast the most men, therefore the leadership is rightly thine."

"I will lead you to a successful combat," Armand stated.

"If Allah wills."

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"And when?"

"Delay is evil. There are doubtless many troops on the way. When they arrive, they must find us victorious, the post captured. We have decided to attack in the morning."

"I am ready—" El Goleah assented.

XI

"CHECKMATE!" announced the lieutenant triumphantly. He leaned back on his camp-chair, gloating over the board before him.

Duflos smiled quietly, swept the chessmen into the box.

Though the night was cool outside, almost cold, he was stifling within the tent.

"Another game, captain?"

"No."

The lieutenant arose, went to the opening, then turned.

"Any orders, sir?"

"No. Carry on as usual."

"I thought that the latest reports, you know—the concentration of the tribes would perhaps alter your plans. Should I issue orders for distribution of cartridges?"

"Later, later—in the morning," Captain Duflos snapped impatiently.

The other saluted and left. True, Duflos realized, he should have given orders. But the probability of an attack was so remote. Yet, Sidi Bechir was a knife thrust into the heart of the raiders, planted deep in their old stamping-ground.

He drank another absinthe, but the expected kick did not materialize.

"Seems as though my stomach is copper lined," he murmured.

He tore open the collar of his light tunic, and went out, in the open. There was a bright moon, which silvered the minaret in a long shaft of gleaming white pointing toward the sky. Under the relaxed discipline—for when the chief is absent-minded, the unit goes to pieces—the troopers, finding themselves crowded in the yard, had transferred their tents to the foot of the exterior wall.

Alone, showing the masterly hand of Criquet, the disciplinary detachment was in its place, within the walls. Duflos, as he passed, was aware of the blanketed forms standing out against the sand like dark bumps. The sentry saluted listlessly, opening his drowsy eyes for a second. A week before, yes, even a day, Duflos would have reprimanded him. But now he passed casually and said nothing.

In the open, the wind was cool, too cool. Duflos found himself shivering, first hot, then cold. He must be ill, he decided. His brain had queer lapses lately, when he would fail to remember names, or stutter when giving orders.

He drew out a cigaret, noticed that his hand shook. The first match went out before he was able to obtain a light.

"Hold on," he warned himself. "This mad thinking, thinking is ruining my nerves."

He deliberately struck matches, held them, until by tremendous exertion of will, he succeeded in keeping his hand still. But, the moment he relaxed, he shook again, worse than ever. He felt suddenly warm again, a sickening warmth that crept up to his body from the ground like the glowing heat of an infernal furnace.

The blood seemed to rush to his head with a solid thumping impact. He felt weak, dizzy. He rubbed a moist palm across his forehead, but the gesture could not remove from his brain the whirling cobweb of thought that meshed in everything. Gone was the sense of responsibility for his men, gone was the officer. A strange man, a second personality had taken its place.

This annoying inability to keep his mind on business— Even now, he was relying upon his inferiors to do his work, and he felt that this might lead to something unpleasant. Yet, he could not shake off the lethargy that had seized him.

He stopped suddenly and looked about him. Where was he? There was the Arab camp, some distance away. He shifted his march, entered the first inner tents lane.

"Greetings, *sidi capitaine.*"

Duflos was face to face with the Fez trader.

"Welcome among us," the Arab said.

His head empty, his legs insecure beneath him, vaguely realizing where he was, Captain Duflos drew himself up.

"Greetings," he replied.

"Come within."

The man led the way to his tent, illuminated by a smoky, ill-smelling oil-lamp. "Rest, for thou art ill."

"Ill," Duflos repeated.

"Thy face is as flaccid as soft wool—and white——"

"I am ill," Duflos agreed.

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"Men of thy race get so in the desert."

"I will go now."

"No. Rest here until thou art well, or at least allow me to call thy men to help thee walk back."

"Nonsense. I will rest. Do not call my men."

He leaned back on the divan, which felt soft and pleasing to his tired muscles.

"One of my cameleers passed thy Spahis yesterday."

"Good," said Duflos listlessly.

"They will be here in the morning."

Duflos nodded. Yes, with the tribes restless, he was glad the Spahis were on the way.

The servant brought him a glass of wine. He sipped casually, and noticed that his hand was at last steady. Even as he watched his own long fingers in the dim light, a drowsiness came over him.

Captain Duflos slept.

XII

"CAPTAIN! Captain!"

The trader was shaking him roughly by the shoulder.

"What's the matter?" he managed to ask.

"It is dawn, and I have news—" the trader indicated a man, who was just within the tent opening, a lithe fellow, almost naked, and still panting from the exertion of a headlong race over the sand.

Duflos smoothed his wrinkled uniform. His tongue felt heavy and his head throbbed.

"What is it, the news?" he asked again.

"The Tuareg and the hostile Arabs have united. We are fleeing."

From without came the uproar of departure, the shouts of men, the squealing of camels.

"When will they be here?" Duflos breathed, reaching for his sword.

"They were but a few hundred yards behind me at the start," the informer replied. "Being alone, I made better time. It may be fifteen minutes."

Duflos staggered outside, his one idea to get to the marabout before the men went out to drill.

After the semiobscurity of the tent, he was half-blinded by the new sun, and stood for some seconds, bewildered. Then, from the marabout came the sound of the drill-bugle. The detachment had issued from the gate! At the same time, the tent in which he had spent the night fell down, and was gathered up by the panic-stricken Arabs.

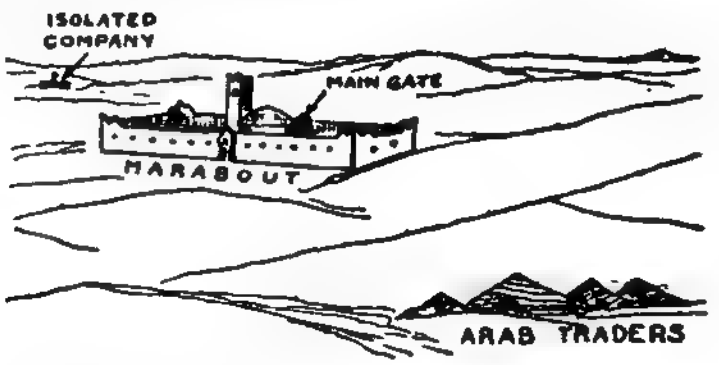
The first of the caravan was already on the way, streaking for the northeast.

His sword and heavy service revolver impeded him. He was short of breath. In spite of the difficulty caused by the loose sand, the marabout drew nearer. He threw away first sword, then revolver, his belt. As he ran, he cursed himself for his folly.

His feeling of the night before—his sickness—it had been drunkenness. The absinthe——"

He lengthened his stride, and his mind attempted to evolve a method of defense.

But he was too late.



A whirlwind of riders had swept up in front of the marabout, discharging their weapons as they passed. Billows of smoke from the black powder cartridges of the *mekabels* rose up and obscured his vision. But he knew the company was to drill on the other side of the marabout. He could not join them, the enemy was between. So, he made direct for the rear door of the enclosure, which was as yet free.

From the sentry on duty came the sharp crack of the high-power rifle. Duflos sped ahead, reached the marabout, sprang within. Criquet met him, a rifle grasped in his huge fists, his usually red face a pasty white.

"Get your Turcos at the loopholes. I'm going to the gun platform," panted the captain.

Criquet's stentorian voice boomed out, and the Turcos scurried to their posts, and added their fire to the din. The captain made his way to the platform of the minaret.

He took in the situation.

The lieutenant in command of the drill had formed his frightened men into a square, and received the first shock on

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fixed bayonets. Men and horses were down. Duflos was aghast at the sight of his company, cut off from the marabout, with the swirling natives about them, Tuareg, Arabs. Yes, the trader had spoken the truth.

The sergeant of engineers was at his post at the machine-gun. A Turco was to assist him.

"Open fire," Duflos ordered.

The first belt was inserted, and the long-nosed weapon spat, with sudden jarring coughs, and cut a path in the serried ranks of the riders.

"Here, let me have the butt," clamored Duflos.

He pressed his shoulder to the leather cushion, sighted and pressed the release lever. The shock of each explosion shook him, but he exulted when he saw the terrific result of the discharge. Some of the Arabs dismounted, knelt on the sand, and fired at the machine-gun position. Their bullets crunched into the wall, sending loose plaster flying in cascades. The bluish smoke formed a haze.

Mad with anger, with the lust to kill, Duflos signaled for another belt. The impassive sergeant fitted a new band of ammunition. The sharpshooters on the sand fell as the stream of lead was directed on them. The sand spurted as the conical bullets struck.

Then, something happened to the shining machine, as Duflos had feared. Duflos turned the piece over to the sergeant to be fixed, leaned over the parapet, glanced down at Criquet whose voice had come through the rattling shots.

"Captain!" the big sergeant bellowed. "There's a bunch of these ——s on foot, about to attack the gate!"

"Hold them till we get this coffee-grinder in shape."

Duflos turned to the engineer, whose deft fingers were handling the many parts of the breech that create the chief trouble in the complicated Saint Etienne gun. Again the long muzzle was pointed, but this time toward the gate.

"Criquet, open that gate!"

Criquet ran across the yard, lifted the heavy bars, and the great panels swung on their rusty hinges. A flood of Arabs and Tuareg spouted in. Bare-headed, their little top-knots ridiculous, naked to the waist, steel in hand, they rushed forward.

Before they could reach the center of the yard, however, the machine-gun caught them obliquely, laid them down by the dozen. The Turcos waited until the fire slackened, then sprang forward with the bayonet. The attackers, decimated, bewildered, fled.

Criquet calmly closed the doors, dropped the bars into place.

Duflos found time to glance at the company.

The men were still fighting. The defense was well-organized now, the first rank on one knee, the rest standing behind. By keeping in square formation, they could beat their way back to the marabout.

Firing came from the north, and Duflos, turning his glasses in that direction, saw that the caravans had been overhauled, and were also fighting. The enemy's stroke had been well-timed, splendidly carried out.

He turned back toward the company.

Through his glasses, he was able to see each tense face, every gesture.

Suddenly the firing from the square ceased.

"What's the matter?" Duflos exclaimed.

"Run out of cartridges, I guess," the engineer replied. "Only fifty are given to a man for drill."

"What can we do?"

For answer, the sergeant again bore down with his gun.

Duflos' agony was intense. This disaster was his fault. What could he do? He had not enough men to create a diversion. Should he open the gate and go out with the ten Turcos? He could not last five minutes. And the company was melting fast.

He saw one little trooper, wounded and isolated, fight against four men, bayonet flashing in and out, parrying, striking, leaping this way and that, then finally sink under the blades of his opponents.

"The poor ——," thought Duflos.

And this also was his fault, that the young fellow had gone out without a chance for his life. He should have foreseen this attack, sent out scouts. Neglect of duty, unpardonable neglect. No matter the outcome of the battle, nothing could change the fact that he had neglected his duty.

He should have seen that the men had enough cartridges. There were boxes and boxes piled under the shadow of the walls. And there were half a hundred spare rifles that could have been used. The stupidity

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of the situation—his men being killled through lack of ammunition, when there was a big supply, within the walls.

The machine-gun again stalled. This time, the engineer seemed unable to do anything.

"Has to be taken apart—cleaned," he said.

The sharpshooters resumed their work. This time, unhampered by the return fire, they got results. The Turco on Duflos' right dropped his piece, stood straight against the wall. Duflos turned, and saw that his face had been crushed in by a bullet. And, even as he looked, the body bent double, the feet remained in place, the head dropped to the ground. Something unpleasantly warm and wet drenched the captain's sleeve.

Duflos picked up the rifle, fired.

The company was still struggling, bayonets against rifles, progressing slowly toward the enclosure, leaving a wake of wounded troopers. A brief struggle around each of the abandoned men, and the advancing tide of natives swept on, leaving the bodies mutilated.

At several points along the wall, the enemy clambered, attempting to enter the marabout, only to be repulsed by the ever alert Criquet and his Turcos. The sergeant, animated by the flame of conflict, seemed to be everywhere at once. His tall form showed above the smaller Turcos, and in the nick of time, he would bound forward, bayonetted rifle in hand, and turn the tide.

Duflos, seeing that he was useless on the tower, was about to go down into the yard, to take active part in the defense, when he noticed that the firing in the direction of the fleeing caravans had increased. The traders might be winning out. Perhaps they would come to his aid.

That Criquet—a hero he was, nothing less! He had done enough today to get his lieutenant's stripe and the cross. On the other hand, he, Duflos had better hand in his decoration—he was not worthy of wearing it. Three hundred men imperiled through his day-dreams, and his drunkenness!

As an officer, he was a failure. Yes, this would be a blot on his record. If he lived—and he did not intend to—he could never stand the humiliation of being referred to as—Duflos, who muffed his job at Sidi Bechir, was caught napping.

"Criquet!" he called.

"Captain?"

"Get your Turcos together and cov... side the minaret. The yard is too lo... be defended longer."

"The disciplinary detachment w... massacred."

"To —— with them," Duflos shout...

Criquet looked up, and Duflos c... sight of his sweat-inundated face, ... tense neck muscles, the strong teet... neath the limp mustaches.

"Orders are to take care of them ... he answered; "orders from the major

"To ——with your orders from Ain Sc... I'm in command here."

Criquet looked up, gigantic, sublim... calm in the tumult.

"To —— with your orders!" he repl... "I am first a battalion sergeant. Your ... cos are your own. Call them back ... stick with my men."

Duflos was daunted by the sergea... devotion to his orders. True, Criquet ... primarily an African battalion non-com... responsible for the welfare of his com... And he was proving Duflos' superior ... carrying them out to the end, his ord... Duflos could not hold back an exclamat... of admiration.

A bugle rang.

Duflos turned, startled, in the direc... of the sound.

From the north were rushing numer... riders, the long-awaited Spahis, twenty-... in number, followed by the riders of ... caravans. The turning of the tide!

And yet, when he turned toward ... enemy, he doubted the result, for he s... issuing from their midst a strong colum... Tuareg horsemen.

They were led by a man who grasped ... his hand a flashing sword.

XIII

WHEN Armand Caverlet, riding ... the van of the attack, first saw ... tiny tri-color fluttering at the cr... of the minaret, a splotch of pulsating ... in the sky, he had laughed, laughed alou...

The emblem of the far-off land could ... compare with the imperious need of his ow... people. What did the flag mean to h... Oppression. Yes, he would be laugh... down that flag before many hours h... passed.

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uring the first mad assault, he had ex-
d; but when the soldiers had reformed,
ied to fight against the terrific odds, a
ue sense of pride had stirred within
. He could not forget that he was
dly of that race. War was not alto-
ier a matter of training and discipline,
these pale-faced fellows had only a
mish under their belts, and yet they
his veterans of the border resolutely,
r the first scattering onslaught.

Ie had seen Duflos' precipitated flight
he door of the marabout, realized that
had isolated the commander from his
n, and rejoiced in the certainty of vic-
y. The machine-gun had caused him a
ment's uneasiness, but now that, also,
s silent, as silent as the uniformed men
ing on the sand, he was sure of success.
The fearful losses in his own ranks ap-
led him, but that was the price to be paid.
me must die to make life worth living for
iers. The few must suffer for the many.

Glancing down, he noticed blood on his
ots—French blood. To encourage his
n, he had leaped his horse into the first
ighly formed square of the defenders.
ien the organization fell in detail, before
busy blades of the Arabs, only to re-
m again, this time nearer the wall. But
ere was French blood on his boots.

This time he did not laugh. He thought
the massacre of the Humbers Mission.
aring the veil from his face, he wiped the
ther clean and threw the rag from him.

He gave his orders in Tamashek and
abic, his voice clear over the rattle. But
e French drew closer together, presented
unshaken front bristling with bayonets,
hich darted out, pierced, and were re-
ieved in short, lightning flashes. One of
ie little soldiers, sensing his helplessness,
ept, the tears rolling down his beardless
eeks, but his teeth were set, his bayonet
ady. Frightened? Of course they were.
ut they fought.

Armand rode from one group to the
ther, cheering, encouraging. For himself,
e felt no fear. This was what he had been
orn to, what he should have been doing;
order warfare. His eyes embraced the
hole battlefield. He gave his orders in
equence, kept a unity of effort that was
eginning to tell. When the cartridges of
he troopers gave out, he made his way
o the forefront, and offered them an hon-
orable surrender. No one paid heed.

Then he realized that in the desert quarter was never given, or taken. The fighting was to the death. This was no struggle of government against government, but of individual against individual, with all the bitterness of personal enmity.

"Forward," he shouted again and again, when, repulsed by bayonets, his men scattered.

They would reform and resume.

A private, cut off from the rank, ran toward him, blade leveled. Armand lifted his sword, but could not strike. He evaded the onrush by swerving his horse. A rider close behind the man downed him immediately. As he fell, he cried out—in French! Then Armand knew to the full the horror of the moment. But it was too late—too late.

"Forward," he cried.

Then he too, heard the bugle-call!

Turning, he saw the Spahis. The Spahis —his former comrades, his brothers in arms.

"Follow me!" he cried, and hundreds of his men detached themselves from the mass.

Then he rode out to meet the Spahis, blade drawn.

The red vests, the floating burnous, the red *chechias*—the uniform he had once worn! And the sergeant in the lead, he knew him. One of his brother non-coms. Often he had sat across from him, drinking, playing cards. A friend——

"Halt!" he raised his hand.

His men obeyed implicitly.

The leader of the Spahis halted in his turn, surprized, thinking no doubt that a truce had been declared. Armand rode forward.

"Withdraw," he ordered. "You are not enough to make a fight worth while. A useless killing would be the result."

The Spahis leader came closer, then exclaimed—

"Armand Caverlet!"

"Yes, that's why I'm giving you a chance."

"You—give—me—a chance—you dirty renegade!"

The Spahis lifted his revolver, fired. Armand heard the report, was conscious of a blow in the side. But his mind was clear. Of course, that was what every one would call him—a dirty renegade. His resentment returned. These thoughts shot through his mind in the space of the detonation. The second bullet sped by.

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Before the sergeant could fire again, he struck the revolver from his grasp with an upward stroke of his blade, and crossed swords. About them, released to action by the sight of the fighting leaders, the two parties shocked.

Caverlet had no fear of the Spahis. He had met him a dozen times with foils, and always won. In two passes, he struck the weapon from the other's grasp, drew back his arm, menaced the chest with his point.

"Get out of this!" he shouted, still unwilling to kill.

The man laughed fiercely and reached for the carbine in the saddle-boot. There was nothing else to be done, Caverlet released his arm, shot his point through the cavalryman's torso. Then he felt himself wavering in the saddle.

"Art thou hurt?" some one inquired near him.

He faced one of the Tuareg leaders.

"Yes, in the side," Caverlet answered, for the first time conscious of his wound.

"If thou canst still ride, there is no harm," callously replied the other. "Take heart. Look."

The Spahis had been annihilated. The watchmen of the caravans were again in flight, galloping for their main body to the north. The company, reduced to less then a hundred men, was still making a bold front. But the machine-gun was still silent.

"We'll carry the marabout," the Targui chief went on. "And that soon. See, I gather my men!"

Yes, the half-naked men were grouping.

And he, El Goleah, must lead the assault.

XIV

WITHIN the walls, there was a respite, the lull in the storm.

Criquet, panting, his great chest heaving with the roar of a motor, his eyes half-shut in momentary relaxation, stood, his hands crossed where the bayonet interlocked with the rifle. The blood dripped down from the four-edged bayonet on to his hands, down his arms, from which he had rolled back the sleeves. He looked like a monstruous butcher resting from the slaughter.

There were six Turcos left, the others were sprawled on the ground. One, his head and shoulders in the fountain, dripped blood, clouding the water, the thick liquid curling down in sinuous curves.

In their corner, the men of the disciplinary detachment huddled. Some were praying, others cursing, while some looked about for weapons, only to be sharply ordered away by the Turcos.

Borel, gloomily silent, stood between Frog Head and Desmard, who had come to him, as men of weak character will gravitate to the more intelligent in time of need.

"We're gone," muttered the ex-Apache.

Desmard sniffed.

Borel knew that Frog Head was right. No matter what orders were given the Barbarians, they would kill every man, armed or not. He suddenly decided to make a move he had been contemplating long. He crossed to Criquet, who looked up at him questioningly. In the bigger events now taking place, the sergeant appeared to have forgotten his enmity, and smiled.

"Nice mess!" he remarked. "Nice mess!"

"There are rifles here—why not hand them to us?"

"Against orders."

"I know, but our lives are at stake."

Criquet shrugged.

"A great deal of good obedience will do you in another few minutes," Borel went on.

Criquet glanced at the wall, chipping under the bullets.

"Can't help it."

Duflos suddenly leaned over the parapet, above them.

"Eh there, sergeant."

"Captain?"

"Distribute rifles to the disciplinary detachment."

"Against orders," Criquet stubbornly replied.

"Our skins depend on it, Criquet. Go ahead. I take the responsibility."

Borel laughed shortly. How like Duflos, he thought, as he joined in the rush for the ammunition-boxes. Cartridges were passed about. Then the rifles were handed to the men. Borel, intoxicated by the feel of the walnut stock and polished barrel, so long desired, made for the nearest loophole.

Under the renewed activity from the marabout, the Arabs momentarily scattered. The square of infantry made rapid progress toward the enclosure. If they could reach the gate, the outpost might hold until the arrival of the relief column from the garrison cities to the northeast.

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Criquet ran from one man to the next, distributed compliments, slaps on the back.

"That's fine, Borel. Keep it up!"

Borel turned and grinned, then straightened from the loophole. With an impulsive gesture, he offered his hand to the sergeant. Unhesitatingly, Criquet grasped it.

"We'll get through, sergeant," agreed Borel.

"Got to—ain't finished with you yet, blockhead," Criquet joked. Then exclaimed—

"——!"

Borel followed his gaze, through the loophole, to the open, now a vast shamble, a human slaughter-house. The last of the company had just gone down.

"They'll be on us, next," shouted Duflos from above.

He was right. The gate was blown down almost immediately. Criquet rallied a dozen men, faced the opening, in which appeared swarms of Tuareg. Then, the portion of wall adjoining the gate went, blown up by powder-sacks exploded at its foot. The wave of natives surged in.

The disciplinary detachment faced about. The Arabs and Tuareg retreated out of range, in the shelter of the remaining wall.

Duflos descended from his platform—took immediate command.

Magazines were filled, bayonets fixed. The defenders formed into line, Duflos standing back a few feet, revolver in fist, his bronzed face as steady, as calm as at drill. From the outside, the firing resumed. Then the head of the Tuareg storming party appeared.

Criquet, who had been crouching slightly ahead of his men, suddenly fell on his face, lay spread out. A red blotch grew on the back of his white tunic. Duflos' pistol sounded, and little Desmard fell.

But Criquet drew first on his hands and knees, then to his feet. He turned, and all saw the mocking smile on his face.

"One through the back, boys—now for one through the chest!" he cried hoarsely.

He plunged forward. Before his onslaught, the Tuareg hesitated, turned. His white form struggled, men fell right and left, then he, in his turn went down.

Fired by his example, regardless of Duflos' warning, every man arose and went forward to the attack, silently, gathering speed at each stride.

They were all athletes, in superb physical condition, strength built by the labor on the rock-piles. They wielded the rifles like feathers. At the first shock the natives broke.

Borel had a brief glimpse of Caverlet running up and down, attempting to make his men stand, then he found himself confronting the first Arab. The fellow had a grin on his face. A lunge, with all the weight of his great body behind it, a twist of the bayonet, and the fellow was down. Frog Head at his side was clearing a circle about him with a clubbed rifle, knocking aside the simitars aimed at him, smashing heads.

"Outside after them!" screamed Borel.

The cry was taken up by all.

"Outside! Outside!"

Yes, the natives must be driven from the marabout.

Borel was dimly conscious of striking out, of dodging blows, of slipping his long blade beneath an outstretched arm, into the exposed flank. He leaped back from thrusts, closed in. Frog Head was close, panting from time to time—

"Outside, Bicos, outside——"

The wall was reached, crossed. The Tuareg were back in the open.

But while they were driving one band out, others had climbed the wall, and the detachment found itself surrounded. Back to back, they fought on.

"Each man for himself—make for the minaret!" shouted Duflos, and gave the example.

Borel made obliquely across the yard, toward the little tower. Frog Head, he knew, was close behind, and the few others who were able to follow.

The lower door was locked behind them, the platform reached.

Including Duflos, there were eight men in the minaret.

The engineer sergeant was dead. The captain immediately placed a man on the stair loophole, gave orders in the sharp, barking voice he assumed when he addressed the disciplinary detachment men.

Borel clenched his fists as he listened.

Duflos turned to him.

"Why don't you get busy?" he asked.

"I have no orders to receive from you," Borel replied, his smoldering resentment, long repressed, coming to the surface.

"I am in command here!"

"There is no officer, no private here,"

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Borel declared. "Men are equal before death."

Duflos darkened; he took a quick step forward.

"I won't brook rebellion," he threatened.

"No?"

Borel leaped forward, grasped him by the breast of his tunic, shook him as a terrier does a rat. His teeth ground together, the veins on his temple throbbed. In his grasp, held in the iron clutch of the muscular hands, Duflos was helpless as a child.

Frog Head grinned. The others joined in the laughter. They had long hated the rigid officer, who represented the system that had sent them to the rock-pile.

Outside, the natives, recovering from the struggle, were quiet.

With a last shake, Borel hurled the captain against the wall.

"I may die, but not under your orders," he exclaimed. "You are hereby removed from command. What do you fellows say?"

"Right. Let's fight for ourselves."

Duflos needed more convincing. Confident in his own strength, apparently believing that he had been caught by surprize and that given an even chance he could handle the trooper, he stepped forward again, refastening his collar, his calm regained.

"Nonsense, Borel," he muttered.

Borel whirled on him.

"Keep quiet!"

Then Duflos leaped. For Borel the struggle was play. He caught the captain's wrist, twisted it until the arm was behind his back, and, placing his free hand under the chin, pushed. Duflos groaned, and when released fell to the ground.

The private waited hopefully. He longed for the captain to make another move. He wanted to avenge the bitter moments he had spent since leaving the company in Ahamar. His resolutions slipped off like a peel, and left only the elemental, raw desire for vengeance.

"Break his neck," suggested Frog Head, who saw in every man in uniform a policeman, the breed that had hounded him since childhood.

Borel merely shrugged.

"Don't be too sure of yourself, Borel," Duflos spoke up. "The caravans will reach the next outpost by morning, and in two days, the column will be here. I'll forget the incident. There's still a chance for life——"

"Stay where you are," Borel retorted.

He inspected the minaret. The natives had no artillery, and the walls were bullet-proof. On the lower floor were casks of water, food. They could subsist for a week on the accumulated supplies.

Frog Head, who was watching the enemy, turned his head and spoke—

"Flag of truce!"

Borel, startled, looked toward the gate. True enough, two men were advancing, one bearing a white flag.

Unusual for the natives to use a civilized custom. Then he suddenly remembered that Caverlet was probably with them. He took out his handkerchief, fastened it to the muzzle of his rifle, and stood above the parapet.

The two envoys stopped below, looked up. One of them was unveiled—Armand.

"Borel?" he called.

"Here."

"Thought you'd be. Didn't find you on the field, so decided that you had escaped; hot day, eh?"

"Quite. Didn't you find it so?"

"It's over, though."

"Yes?"

"I give you all your lives, and an escort to Morocco—or a path to the nearest French post if you prefer."

"Thanks," Borel replied dryly.

"But we want Duflos."

"Ah?"

"Yes. The Arabs he defeated when he got his cross want him."

"And you'll hand him over to them?" Borel asked.

"Soon as I get him."

"What if we don't give him up?" Borel pressed.

"You'll all be killed when the minaret is taken. I can not hold back my men; they're mad as it is."

Duflos approached.

"Hand me over," he said to Borel, sarcastically. "That's the cheapest price for your lives."

Borel looked at him steadily for some seconds, then down to Armand.

"Give us fifteen minutes to decide, won't you?"

"All right, if you accept my offer, just open the door. We'll get Duflos ourselves."

Armand retreated to cover.

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Borel faced Duflos.

"I know what you think. Your —— superiority is creeping out. Sold by traitors, eh? No, Duflos, your life won't buy ours. We'll hand you over to the Arabs, and hold Sidi Bechir. And—" Borel smiled gently— "I am doing this, not from a feeling of revenge, but for the sake of a principle—remember?"

Duflos nodded.

"Justice," he said evenly.

"We, the outcasts, will form a court, be judges. There are several charges against you, Duflos."

"What are they?"

"The first is that you overstepped your duties in your harsh tratment of the rebel tribes. That is not our concern, the Arabs will judge you." He paused briefly. "As for the others, they'll come out during your trial, which will take place immediately."

"Proceed," Duflos agreed with a smile.

"Be seated, accused."

Duflos backed to the machine-gun stand, sat, crossed one leg over the other, nonchalantly.

"Will the court permit smoking?" he asked mockingly, and lighted a cigaret. With a shrug, he tossed the rest of the package to Frog Head.

"Here," he offered.

Borel vaguely sensed that the iron-nerved captain was taking the situation away from him, was master of himself. He too must keep calm.

"Gentlemen," he addressed the others. "We were all tried according to army rules. The majority were for them, and we were sent here. We, as convicts, being for once in the majority, have a fine specimen of the army to judge. Let us grant him as much consideration as was given us."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Frog Head.

"The first charge against Captain Duflos is that, in upholding discipline, system, he crushed us as individuals. Is that admitted?"

"Yes," all agreed.

"Any defense, Duflos?"

"You were, are still, under military rules. I merely did my duty, and, though it unfortunately displeased and inconvenienced you all, I'm glad I did. Proceed—what a lot of talk before murdering a lone man!"

"Good, you admit the charge—and claim mercy on the plea that you did your duty. You say we are still military men. Well, captain, as such we shall now consider the second charge—that you have, through flagrant neglect of duty, caused the loss of three hundred Frenchmen, and the destruction of Government property."

Duflos, for the first time showed emotion.

"Quite true," he said.

"You admit it?"

"Yes, but I have to call to your attention a slight illegality in this trial," Duflos smiled.

"What?"

"A man must be judged by a jury of his peers. You are convicts."

"To that, there is ready answer," Borel replied. "We were all privates. How many of us were judged by privates? Not one. Argument waived."

Borel turned to the men.

"We have proved Duflos guilty of the charges. Penalty?"

"Death," said Frog Head.

The rest signified their approval.

Duflos rose, threw his cigaret-stub over the parapet. His hands did not shake *now*.

"Why don't you shoot me yourselves?"

"We are judges, not executioners!"

"Ah, yes."

Borel stood, puzzled. He was not getting the satisfaction he had expected. But he had gone too far to turn back. Should Duflos survive, he would again be arrested, perhaps shot. He had struck the captain. This would be his third offense.

He wiped his face, coughed.

"All over," he said blankly.

The others looked at him—at each other. Now that the sentence of the mock-trial had been passed, no one of them seemed to be willing to carry it out, even so far as to open the lower door.

"What about you, Frog Head?" some one asked.

Frog Head, white, trembling, shook his head.

"I can't," he said.

Duflos glanced at them all pityingly.

"No guts," he said. "Well, to end the suspense, I'll open that door myself. This waiting makes me nervous."

His face was blenched now, as were the others'. He moved toward the stairway.

Borel was suddenly conscious that he was doing what he had refused to do when Caverlet had asked. No, he could not give up

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a Frenchman to the Arabs. Even if Duflos had been a murderer, he had a right to the protection of himself and his comrades.

He ran forward, took Duflos by the shoulder.

"Come back," he said, "you belong with us."

He had expected some protests from the others.

Frog Head voiced the general sentiment: "We're white. We're French. Duflos, in spite of his stripes, is nearer to us then the brown bellies outside."

What the threats had not done, Borel's sudden move did. Duflos stammered. His lips twitched, and, glinting in the sun, a tear ran down the bridge of his long nose. All felt a strange choking, a tightening of the throat, though at the same time, they were elated, happy.

Duflos spoke, at last:

"I have felt the way you have. Seen nothing worth while in life. But there is: The brotherhood of men like you with men like me. We're all one, with our mistakes, our pride."

He smoothed the wrinkles of his tunic, tightened his belt. He was again the officer, cold, precise.

"I presume I take back command. The Tuareg are coming for their answer. Get your rifles. I'll answer that renegade when he comes."

BOREL, Duflos, Frog Head and three others were still alive when, on the dawn of the third day, the column arrived, and the minaret opened its door.

Around the marabout were found the bodies of close to six hundred Arabs and Tuareg, and Sidi Bechir was still French.

Outside the walls, Borel found Armand's body. He drew from a pocket over the heart a tiny volume of poems, blood stained. He glanced at the title—"Flowers of Evil."

SIX years later, Captain Borel was the first to enter Douamont, north of Verdun, at the head of his company of colonial infantry.

The bodies of those who had fallen in the previous attempts were everywhere. Borel was startled by the sight of a dead private, in the uniform of the Foreign Legion, waist-high in mud, his torso braced against the side of a shell-hole. Even in the mummified face, there was no mistaking the fine features. Duflos had resigned from the regiment after sending in a report of the Sidi Bechir affair, in which he praised the convicts, and did not spare himself. Then, he had disappeared. The survivors of the disciplinary detachment had been reinstated. Borel had progressed up the ladder.

The glazed eyes of Victor Duflos, ex-captain and disciplinarian, still held something of their old defiance.

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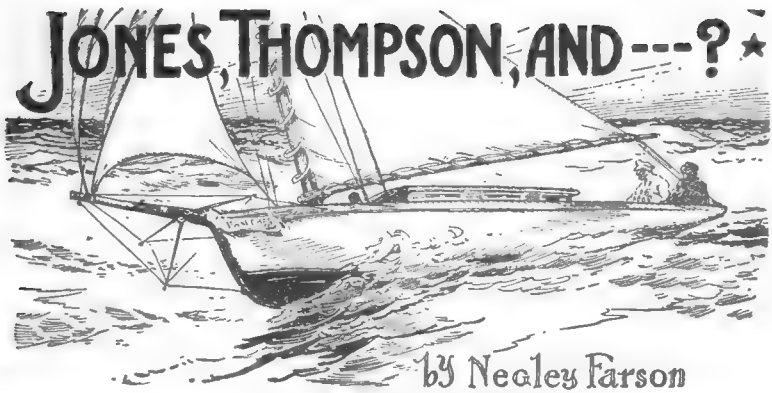
JONES, THOMPSON, AND ---? ★



by Negley Farson

Author of "It's Only a Question of Time."

I WON'T tell you the State this happened in. It might get me in trouble; and I've had enough trouble already in that State. I never want to see it again; but, knocking about down there—with Joe in the yawl—we used to say that it was the prettiest place on God's green earth. It was, too.

The night we ran into Deep Harbor was pretty *and* peaceful enough to set you to dreaming. Low country, with miles on end of wavy green corn, red patches where they had the tomatoes in; and every now and then we'd run past a little whitewashed shack set back from the water, with an orchard and "truck" patch behind it—and an old hunting dog barking somewhere——

It is thirteen miles run in from the bay, around a neck in the reach, and we anchored about two hundred yards off the town just at sundown. A low bank of clouds under the sun looked like wind, so we put down the port bower and gave her plenty of cable, in case we had to ride out a blow. A little cabin-cruiser lay between us and the shore.

We had caught some horn-pouts up-bay the night before; and while Joe cooked I furled the canvas and made everything tidy. After putting up the riding-light I came down, and Joe had the stuff already laid out on the center-board table—fish, sauté potatoes and black-jack. Skimpy; but we were living that way about then as we were just about broke. Eighty-five cents stood between us and starvation; we'd counted it that morning and decided to put into Deep Harbor to see if we couldn't get a job on some farm.

. .

We grumbled over it washing the dishes, but we figured that a couple of weeks would get us enough cash to last until we reached the salt water. When we'd finished we pushed off for shore.

"Work!" the gang in front of the drug-store laughed at us. "Why, we-all doan' want no hands this time o' year. Come 'long 'bout hawvest."

"When's that?" asked Joe.

That tickled them: we didn't know when harvest time was! We didn't, either; farming wasn't our game. And as far as that goes I'll bet you that not one of them louts could have tied a bowline, or done a sheeps-head, if you'd done it for him right in front of his eyes. But we didn't talk back to them. We had to connect with that job.

After they had got done laughing Joe dug up the "makings" and passed them out—just to show we were friendly.

"We can't live on the fresh air and scenery," he said to them; "we simply got to find work. Don't you know of anything at *all?*"

"How 'bout your boat, stranger?" one asked. "Want to sell her?"

"How much?"

I knew Joe was just joshing.

The big fellow who had asked the question scratched his head, tried to look like he

"*Jones, Thompson, and—?*" *copyright 1923, by Negley Farson*

**This is an Off-the-Trail Story. See first contents page.*

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knew what he was talking about, and said he "figgered" the *Panther* was worth about two hundred bucks.

"Two hundred dollars!"

Joe was as sore as a crab.

"Why, —— —— it, she's worth more than your whole —— little one-horse town!"

The big guy got up and shook his fist under Joe's nose.

"You dasn't talk thataways to me!"

"The —— you say!" Joe tells him.

"Go git 'im, 'Happy!' " the crowd pipes up; and the big guy draws back a fist about as big as a ham.

But Happy didn't want to "git" anybody after the slashing punch in the mouth Joe handed him.

You know how these small-town crowds fight. Like a pack of wolves. They were all over us. I was winded in no time. So was Joe. And there's no use trying to make out those boys couldn't fight; they were knocking us all over the street. Regular fish-house gang stuff: rolling all over the road. It was a shell road; and when they'd grind your head into those oyster-cases it cut like blazes!

"I've broken my hand!" calls out Joe.

"Kick 'em!" I manages to gurgle. "Kick the living daylights out of the ——".

We got to the boat, and —— pleased we were to get there; but even then we had to row out quite a piece, as that bunch of swine stood on the beach and pegged stones at us. We lay there and got back our wind.

"Nice little crowd," growls Joe miserably. "My flipper's just giving me ——. I tell you what we'll do; we unscrew those boom trees—and then you an' me'll go back—and just walk up the street of that town——"

"We will *not!*" I told him flatly. "I've had all I want. I'm going to soak your hand in hot water."

"Oh, well——"

Joe tried to make out I was depriving him of something; but I knew he was just as glad as I was to get clear of that bunch of highbinders. Those oyster-shells kept sticking into me all over, too. It was a rough town!

"Well anyway," said Joe, "I got a few of 'em. That town won't forget *us* in a hurry."

THAT was incident No. 1; and we hadn't been down in the *Panther's* galley fifteen minutes when No. 2 comes along. Somebody hailed us from alongside—

"Is anybody in there?"

"You bet," answers Joe with his head stuck out of the hatch. "Two of us. How many are you?"

"One," came a laugh out of the darkness. "Don't be alarmed; I'm friendly."

Joe told him to come aboard; and a strapping big chap in town clothes came over the rail. He stood there, peering down in the galley, and at first all I could see of his face was a whacking black beard, as thick and as shiny as the back of a cat. Looked like a foreigner of some sort, not at all what you'd expect to find in a place like Deep Harbor. He stood there, grinning and wagging his head from side to side.

"Beautiful!" he spoke up at last. "Never have I seen such a fight. It was ferocious. Splendid! By the way, I heard one of you shout that he had broken his hand; better let me look at it."

He stared from one to the other of us; and Joe held up the bad paw.

"Ah!"

The big fellow's face lighted up: he leaned over and began feeling it.

"So," he smiled down at Joe, "grit your teeth. I shall hurt you a little;" and before Joe could do anything he had poor old Joe's thumb locked in two crooked, hairy fingers.

He gave a jerk.

"Yow!" Joe howled and jumped all over the galley; and the big fellow stood there laughing at him.

"A dislocation of the ——"

Here he used some word that I couldn't quite catch.

"You must hit very hard," he told Joe. "It will be all right now."

It was funny to watch Joe, breathing on his thumb and not knowing whether to get mad or not; and the way that other fellow took no notice of it at all. He had already taken out his cigaret-case and was holding it out for Joe to take one. He held the match for our two, and then blew it out and lighted another one for his own.

"Three is unlucky," he told us. "They light the church tapers with one."

Joe had evidently decided to be friends.

"Davidson's my name," he said, reaching

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up to shake hands. "Much obliged. This man here is my pal, MacGillycuddy by name. Come down and have a seat."

The big fellow slid through the hatch and soberly shook hands with me.

"Jones," he said, "is my name."

I saw Joe, who was making some black-jack, start up at that. Sounded odd to me, too; "Jones" didn't seem to mate with a face like that! The newcomer didn't seem the least bit embarrassed; leaned his back against the foot of the mast and gave the place the once-over. All the time he was chuckling and rubbing his hands over the knees of his trousers. Clean hands, too. Queer! Me sitting there, staring straight at him, and never twigging at all who he was! I'd seen his picture in the papers often enough!

"Nice little boat you have here," he said, looking up at the racks in the neat little galley. "Yours?"

"Yep," Joe told him; "mine. We're working her together."

"So?" said the other, beginning to smile, "I thought I heard you say before your—ah—combat—that you were in search of that?"

"Work?" grunts Joe. "You bet we're looking for work; but this shore of the bay down here is dead. They don't even know the Civil War is over yet."

Here Joe went on to explain how things stood: enough alcohol to cook the next three days' meals—providing we could find them—twenty gallons of gas for the engine, and that eighty-five cents I mentioned before.

"How would twenty-five dollars a day suit you?" cut in the big chap.

Joe whisked round so quickly I thought he had slipped. I was never more surprized in my life; thought the big chap was joking, but he came through to back up his statement.

"I want your boat for a week," he said. "I want you to take me to some uninhabited island in the bay here, some place where I can be by myself, and call for me at the end of that week. I will pay you for the whole of that time."

"Is that all?"

Joe looked suspicious.

"It is," said the big fellow. "And one other thing; I want you to promise that you will say nothing about it—during that week—to another living soul. After that you can say what you like."

"Does it please you?" he said, turning to both of us.

I think he must have seen some of the doubt in our faces for he continued:

"I give you my word of honor that there is nothing criminal about this. Everything is quite regular, I assure you."

REGULAR! Twenty-five dollars a day—a lonely island—and us to say nothing about it; it didn't seem very regular. Looked like there was a nigger some-wheres in the wood-pile; but Joe jumped at the chance—he often bragged that he would do anything once—and reached over to shake hands on the deal.

"I'll take you," he said, "but I'd be a little more happy if I knew you were telling the truth, Mr.—Jones."

Jones smiled just as if admitting that he knew that we knew his name wasn't Jones, and said—

"Fine; that is a bargain."

"It is," said Joe, "and when do we start?"

"At once if you can," said Jones. "Just make for the first island that fits our description. If possible, I wish to be put ashore before daylight."

In a way, which I would find it hard to explain, he seemed to have taken command over things at that instant. He made us feel as though the *Panther* no longer belonged to us.

He was in the little cabin-cruiser we had noticed lying between us and the shore when we had come in at sunset. He told me while I was rowing him back in the dingey that she had broken down. He was in the drug-store, just about to telephone across the bay to Oriole for another, when we came along and kicked up our shindy. He said we had looked "likely;" so he had changed his mind and come over to offer us the job.

"There is another man with me," he said.

There was, too—a queer baby-faced youth, with thumping thick eye-glasses that made his eyes look like a cat-fish. He was sitting down in the cabin among a litter of suit-cases and one big pine box which I first took to be a coffin.

"Mr. Thompson," Jones said to the other as soon as we saw him, "Mr. Thompson, this is Mr. MacGillycuddy, our new *voyageur*. Mr. Thompson, will you please get your articles together; we are going aboard

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that little sailing-ship out there ahead of us."

Mr. Thompson had a shape like an elephant; but I guessed that it must have all been fat—or else the big box had something mighty heavy in it—for, when he gave it a heave, it just stayed where it was; just as though it were stuck to the floor. Jones stopped him.

"Mr. MacGillicuddy," he said, "will you please put these things into your little boat."

He pointed to the small stuff.

When I came back Jones had managed to get the big box up the companionway all by himself; at least it looked that way. Thompson was standing, blinking down below with a couple of leather suit-cases in his hands.

"Here, let me give you a hand with that," I offered to Jones; but he waved me aside and got the thing over the rail, cussin' away at a great rate.

Thompson just hopped around and did what he was told.

The wind had picked up a little; hit me quite cold on the back of the neck; and it was a bit of a job to get their stuff over the rail of the *Panther*. The big case in particular made Jones sweat not a little; and I could have sworn that during one of the heaves he made to get it aboard something like a groan came from inside it. Joe laughed when I told him about it.

"You're balmy," he said, making fun of my nerves, which had been knocked skew-wiff by the Heinies. You'll be having another spell of the jim-jams if you don't take it easy. That was only the squeak of the wood."

Joe said he was going to put them ashore on Poplar Island, which was a low bit of land we had passed about four miles above the mouth of the reach coming in.

"You remember it?" said Joe. " 'Member you said it looked just as though the trees were standing in water?"

I remembered it all right—just a strip of blue mud with a fringe of green, shiny poplars and a flat, sedgy marsh lying behind them.

"He'll curse you for landing them there," I objected.

"I should worry!" said Joe. "Old Blackbeard said he wanted to be by himself. Well, if you know any more forsaken spot than Poplar, then go out and find it. Besides there ain't another spot that would fit his description within a full day's sail of us. Why, I'll bet you there are twenty square miles of spladder-docks in back of that ribbon of mud."

It answered the bill; there was no mistake about that. It was the mournfulest place one could think of. No man in his right senses would ever set foot there; and I couldn't help puzzling over what Jones had up his sleeve. I could hear him and Thompson gabbing away down in the cabin; they seemed awfully earnest about something. Too earnest somehow to please me; and the more I thought of it the more dissatisfied I was over the contract we had made with them.

It was a hunch—my common sense trying to warn me—but I put all my uneasiness down to the gloomy feeling of putting out of a snug port on a thick night—and that miserable moan of the wind in the shrouds, a sound which will make any bluenose unhappy.

ONCE we got the anchor aboard I began to feel better, as motion, no matter what, takes a mind off the strain. We went out under jib and jigger, and even with these two light sails the old *Panther* just stepped it along. That's the nice part of a yawl; she's handy when she's got no more on than a pocket handkerchief. And, sitting up there on the sprit—watching, in case some fool had forgot to put a riding-light up on his craft—I was just about as well pleased that we were rather bare. The *Panther* was taking a bone like a big drift of snow under the bow.

Coming aft, I stooped to peek into the cabin; but Jones and Thompson had pulled the curtains over the ports. It struck me that it was either a very useless thing to do, or else it was something very much the opposite. In which case they were doing something down there they didn't want us to see.

I told this to Joe and said I thought I'd butt in on them; but he said to leave them alone; we'd have them ashore in a few hours, anyway; and Jones had already forked over one hundred dollars just to show he meant business. We agreed that that seemed as if he was square; but even Joe admitted that he wouldn't be sorry to see the last of them.

We sat there by the wheel, arguing about

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what we'd do with the money. The *Panther* needed attention; once she had been white, but the greasy waters of the oil-works in the bay had left a dirty scum all over her.

"Black's the color," Joe was saying; "black, and then the dirt won't show——"

A most unearthly yell came from the cabin. A —— awful yell!

Joe was across, wrenching at the companionway doors. They were locked!

"What the —— are you drivin' at," he roared, banging on the wood with his fists, "lockin' me outa my cabin? Open these doors —— —— you!"

He was mad as a hatter.

There was a rumble of voices, and then Jones stuck his head out. He was very apologetic.

"My friend has cut himself," he explained. "He dropped a box on his hand. See!"

There was Thompson with a bloody handkerchief wrapped round his hand and a sickly, scared grin on his face.

"Gee!"

Joe forgot all about being mad.

"You sure let out a yell. Must have hurt you like sixty. Want anything?"

"It is nothing."

Jones waved a hand.

"I fix him in a few minutes."

And with that he slammed the doors in our faces. He certainly let us know he'd rented the use of the boat, all right.

"There's a cool one for you," growled Joe. "Nothing bashful about him. Now, what do you make of a cove like that?"

I wasn't thinking much about Jones just at that moment; I had a whiff of something in my nostrils, something which I had got to know pretty well over in France, but which I couldn't place at all. Also, Thompson's yell was worrying me too; it was too much like Jones' name to suit me. Didn't fit. It was a sort of deep-chested roar; and from Thompson's shape one would have expected him to yell like a tenor. High and squeaky.

I told Joe about this, but he was one of those hard-headed persons who take an earthquake to make them see anything.

"Aw," he growled at me, "you're a regular old woman; you and your squeaks and yells an' smells—you'll be seeing things next."

Well, bless my soul! I did! I saw Jones' face come out of the hatchway. It stayed there some time—looking at us; and I watched it. I watched it with all the hair crawling up the back of my neck, but I said nothing about it to Joe. I wish I had now, I wish I had jumped along for'ard and flapped him out of that galley and on to the deck. If ever a man kept his mouth shut when he ought to have been raising a row, it was me then, I can tell you. It would have saved the lot of us.

And as it turned out it was just this seeing things of mine which was to save Joe and me in the end.

BUT that night I had a feeling that if I voiced any more fears Joe would think I was yellow, so I just kept all I was afraid of bottled up inside me. I did —without Joe knowing it—try the companionway doors, only to find them locked tight as a drum. And I did, telling him that I was going up to make black-jack, slide quietly in the galley and try the little door which led into the cabin. Locked; I knew it would be.

Joe and I might as well have been sailing a raft for all the use we had of that cabin. I sat there in the dark and laughed; here were Joe and I, who, to draw it mild, could hardly be classed as good members of the parish, being bossed around on our own craft like a couple of deck-swabs.

While I was down I felt the roll of the sea get under the *Panther*. Big sea, too; I had to hold the kettle on to the burner. We had a hundred miles of open water to windward; and quartering, as we were, once we left the lee of the reach, the *Panther* just smashed into the seas. Coming aft I had to hang on; and there, sitting alongside Joe in the cockpit, was Jones—sick as a cat. I gave him half a cup of scalding-hot black-jack, and he was all over me with thanks.

"You are a gentleman," he shouted at me. "You have all the fine feelings. Ah, my friends—" he jerked round his head to be sick—"my friends, pain is the only real thing in life. Pleasure—all else—is illusion; but this—" he was violently sick again, and, by George, he finished up laughing—"this is real, isn't it? Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Some more of the same line of gibberish followed; he talked as if life wasn't worth living, and then laughed as if he enjoyed it. I kicked Joe's foot, and we sat there and listened. I guess Joe and I had

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never heard a man talk that way before in our lives. He seemed out of his nut. What with the sea, and that hairy-faced man shouting to make himself heard above it, I began to feel nervous as ——!

He seemed in great fettle in spite of his stomach.

"You take it well," Joe told him.

"Ah, no," he laughed delightedly, and slapped Joe on the knee. "I give it up well; that's what you mean. Ha! Ha!—Oh!——"

He was sick again and gave up quite a lot.

Whatever he was, good, bad or indifferent, that fellow was game!

There's no use telling you how we put them ashore. It was just the usual dirty job of a night landing. Old Blackbeard insisted on being landed at once, though it was as black as the ace of spades. We could see that Thompson wasn't at all keen to take a chance on capsizing; but Jones wasn't letting a little thing like that interfere with him. Joe's hand wasn't much use for handling an oar, so I put him ashore with a lantern and some of the small stuff on the first trip.

Next I took Thompson and their dingey, which we had brought along with us. Then I went back and got the old man and his box. He wouldn't let us help them pull their stuff along to the poplars; just kept insisting on saying, "Good-by; see you next Tuesday"; so we pushed off and left them. We let them keep the lantern and, as we rowed back we could see them already unpacking their stuff, Jones leaning over the box.

As soon as we got back in the *Panther's* cabin we unscrewed all the ports. I knew what that smell was now—ether. The cabin reeked with it. Smelt like a hospital!

"Now," I said to Joe, "do you believe me that you and I have seen some rough stuff? or do you still think we've been transporting a picnic?"

He had chucked himself down in his bunk for a smoke; but he sat up at this. He was commencing to show some signs of being worried at last.

"You're sure it's ether?" he asked me.

"Just as sure as I ever was of anything in my life."

"Well, what do you think?" he said, passing the buck to me.

I told him—

"Either we've helped to shanghai a man—or else murder him."

"Aw," he said, trying to laugh, "you're crazy as a fish! You just pick out the worst thing you can think of and then say that was it. Be sensible. Of course we've sat in at something that ain't on the level. I've known that all the time; but you and I are too broke to pass up a chance like this. A hundred and seventy-five iron men will do a lot of good to us and the *Panther*."

"Yeah!" I pointed out. "And a fat lot of good the *Panther* will do you in jail!"

He got sore at that:

"Jail! Why, look here. If they were bumping a guy off, do you think they'd advertise it that way? Do you think they'd stick around this island for a week—waiting for us to call back for them? What's eating you?"

"Nothing; but something's made a meal off your brains all right!" I shot back at him. "Who said they would stick around here for a week? You forgot all about *their* dingey, didn't you? How do you know that week stuff isn't a blind anyway? How do you know they have not killed him already and aren't rowing ashore right this minute? And listen."

I grabbed hold of his arm as he was already scrambling up on deck to look for them.

"How do you know they haven't taken any amount of stuff from this boat—and left it alongside him?"

WE TOOK an inventory of the *Panther* right then and there; but we couldn't find anything missing except Joe's old mate's cap. He had been wearing that earlier on in the evening, and he couldn't remember now what he'd done with it—whether he'd laid it down some place, where it might have gone overboard, or left it on the beach, or what he'd done with it. It had his name and the yawl's inside the hatband. I'd printed it there myself!

"There you are," I said to him. "Plain as day; we're planted."

And planted we were; but not in the way we had it doped out. It was just as if they suspected we might come ashore after them; when we came on deck with that idea in our minds there wasn't a sign of the lantern. In fact—until our eyes got used to the dark—we couldn't even find the bulk of the island. It took us some time to stumble on the fact that the wind had

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shifted while we had been arguing down below; and instead of being bow on, the island was almost astern of us.

We gave up the idea of going ashore, and took the *Panther* up the other shore of the island to wait there for daylight. From the first crack of a smoky-gray dawn until the sun was high in the sky we kept a sharp watch in case they should attempt to cross over to the mainland. And finally Joe couldn't stick it out any longer; about noon he shoved off in the dingey; and through the glasses I saw him land at the foot of the island and strike into the swamp. About an hour later he came over the rail, pleased as Punch with himself.

"A fat prophet you are!" he told me disgustedly. "Here I go and crawl through half a mile of black mud, expecting to see something shady—and what do I see? I see Jones an' Thompson and a big buck nigger playing tag on the beach. Murder! You make me sick!"

"Where did the nigger come from?"

"How the —— do *I* know? Beachcomber, I suppose. Looked that way anyway—half-naked. Nigger name o' Maitland."

"How do you know that?"

" 'Cause I heard them calling him that."

"Oh, you didn't go over?"

"No; catch me butting in on their party and losing the rest of our money that's coming to us. I lay there in the bushes and watched. Thompson was sitting on a rock, writing; and Jones and this nigger were galloping about on the beach. Every now and then Jones would yell out something about no reaction, and Thompson would jot it down on his pad. The silliest game I ever saw. Maitland was a bit deaf, too, as Jones had to holler his name. ——fool way to spend a hot day, I'll tell the world."

While Joe was talking he was peeling off his clothes—all covered with mud—and getting ready to sluice himself down.

"You know," he spluttered with his head half in a bucket, "I think it's a booze party. The nigger was drunk at any rate—staggering all over the place!"

Sitting up on deck there in the hot sun and watching Joe, just as I'd seen him on many and many a morning everything seemed so peaceful and usual that I began to feel almost ashamed of what I had been sure of the previous evening. A booze party might have answered the bill; niggers were all over the bay, running crab trot-lines, and there was no reason on earth why one couldn't have been on the island; but—twenty-five dollars a day! That was the poser; and in spite of all that Joe said I knew that that smell couldn't have been synthetic gin.

We cracked on every stitch of canvas; and as we shot past the foot of the island I could just make out two figures at play on the beach. It was the last look we ever had of those people. Five days later we walked into the ship-chandler's at Oriole to get some seam-cement we'd ordered the previous day, and were arrested for the murder of Professor Ivanoff!

"Is this the man wot was wit' you in Deep Harbor?" one of the plain-clothes men asked Joe; and at the same time he took a firm grab on my arm.

"Why—ye-yes," stammered Joe, hardly able to speak.

"Right!" said the Irishman. "Come along quietly."

HAVE you ever run foul of the law? Been in jail and faced the prospect of soon being hung for a crime that you'd never committed? No, I guess you haven't; when the courts get their hooks on to you you're in for it.

Between innocence and crime is sometimes a very small difference; but in this case it was as big as a mile—and the court couldn't see it. Guilty? Why, it was as plain as the nose on your face! Bloody murderers! That's what we were. People sat in the courtroom and glared at us.

I am not going to take much time telling you what happened to us in that court; and the court didn't waste any either. There was nothing human about justice in that court. It was just a bunch of fixed rules; and as soon as they could finish the rigmarole we were going to be hung.

The judge sat there, scratching his nose, already composing the speech he would give with the sentence! Now, how could any one explain to a crowd like that something which he couldn't explain to himself?

From our fight in Deep Harbor—and the whole town came over to swear what hard characters we were—to the finding of Joe's cap on the beach at Foplar, we had left a string of clues like a paper-chase.

And, knowing this yarn as you do, look what we had to put up against it! Hunting

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a job—broke—in Deep Harbor; and then three days later turning up in Oriole—and living like kings. Why, even the bum lawyer the State gave us believed we were guilty; he simply got furious when we told him about the hundred dollars.

"Now look here," he yapped, "don't try to kid me! I'm your *lawyer!* How the —— do you think I'm going to clear you if you don't come across with the truth?"

I told him to go to ——!

"Come now," he said, beginning all over again. "Why did you start changing the color of your boat? Wasn't it to——"

People were just the same when I told the story in court. Laughed out loud when I tried to tell about the box. The judge had to rap for order when I came to where Joe told about Jones and the nigger playing tag on the beach. And, mind you, this in a State where they still run the Jim Crow cars!

It just shows you how satisfied every one was that we were guilty. I got the feeling of a man trying to swim against a five-mile tide; he knows that no matter how hard he tries, he's bound to be carried away. People had their minds already made up for them by the papers. Photographs! Ivanoff, and his assistant Geoffrey B. French; which was Thompson. Long interviews with the man who had rented them the boat, explaining how they had set off on a fishing-trip.

The keeper of the light on Sharp Island Spindle tells how he sees Jones'—Ivanoff's —body come floating past underneath in the sea. And then a gory description of Jones' face, which has been mashed to a pulp. Great arguments as to what had we done with Thompson's corpse. (They had found the boat high up on the beach; but a high tide had washed the sands clear of all foot-prints.)

But worst of all were the talks given out by Percy J. Prince. He was the millionaire who had endowed the Batemen Institute of Research. He came down to Oriole himself to see that his money got its revenge. Here we'd gone and killed their best surgeon! A couple of other philanthropists came down to take a look at the villains who had done in their pet. *They* talked! And the newspapers printed it all.

Propaganda! A fat chance we had against a combination like that. Why, I'm willing to bet that there wasn't a man within fifty miles who hadn't his mind already made up to hang us. A nice lot to furnish a jury!

The case was hurried on; and then one day when they had me on the rack I reached the end of my patience. All the time that empty-headed lawyer of ours had been trying to put a story into my mouth, asking questions and then saying—

"Now I'm going to suggest——"

And all the time I had been watching Prince's fat face leering away, like a spider would watch something walking into its net; and somehow I just got the feeling that if I didn't force a showdown Joe and I might just as well plead guilty and be done with it all. Anyway I couldn't make things any worse than they were.

Our lawyer was drawling—

"Now, I put it to you——"

"Your honor," I cried out to the judge, "this man is a fool; he's mixing up everything."

And before they could stop me I shouted out all about the rows we had had; how our man had refused to believe us. There was a —— of a row! I was removed.

BACK in my cell I had a fit of nerves—trembling all over; and just as I was settling down in walked Levine. I'd seen him a day or so before when he had come in for my story—a clever little pale-faced man, reporting the case for a big New York paper.

"Well," he said when the warden had left us, "I think you're innocent. Now just tell me this story from beginning to end—and don't forget *anything!*"

"Do you mean it?" I gasped.

"Sure," he said, lighting up a little black cigar. "I think you are telling the truth; but don't get perked up over that. That won't stop these hicks from hanging you. We've got to slap 'em in the face with some cold-blooded facts. Otherwise you're outa luck. Shoot!"

He was a good listener; but that was the hardest job I ever had in my life.

"Make it live!" he kept saying. "Just try and act as if it was all happening again."

When I told him how Jones set back Joe's thumb he made me try it on him. He made me try it; and he made me repeat all the gibberish Jones had spouted while sick in the cock-pit. And, what was astonishing, he corrected me in several places and said—

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"Now didn't he put it this way?"

And he would go on and repeat almost the very words Jones had said.

"Sure!" I exclaimed. "Now how in ——'s name did you know that?"

Then he got up and laughed:

"Why, my simple-minded friend, you're the most innocent man I ever met in my life. You're as naive as a school-girl!"

I frowned at that; and he stood there, chuckling at me. Then his face grew serious, and he came over and sat down beside me.

"You have satisfied me," he said. "It's a safe bet that you've never read Schopenhauer; and yet you have been reeling of bits of him—straight from the matrix. Now if Ivanoff was easy enough in his mind to philosophize with you, it's a cinch that you weren't hauling him off by the scruff of his neck. That lends color to your story.

"Also that superstition about the church tapers and 'three;' there is not one chance in a thousand that any one but a Russian like Ivanoff would mention a thing like that. You wouldn't be able to think of it, anyway. So that all tends to prove that part of your story is true at any rate.

"But what makes me believe the whole tale, aside from my opinion that you two could never concoct such a one, was your scene in the court just now. You are not clever enough to work off anything subtle like that. That was genuine."

"Thank God!" I almost sobbed, and reached out and took hold of his hand.

He snatched it away and lighted another cigar.

"Yes," he said, puffing away like an engine, "I'm satisfied. It fits in with my theory. And a —— weird theory it is, too; too wild for these single-track minds down here to believe in—unless we furnish the goods."

He stopped here and paced up and down, thinking over something.

"You're sure," he said, "that the name of this negro was Maitland?"

"Certain; I made a note of it in my mind when Joe told me. Ask him."

"I have," said Levine; "several times already."

"And then he drove his fist into his palm.

"By ——!" he said half to himself. "They used to pull this stuff off over in England and France; but to think that Ivanoff tried to get away with it here!"

"What?" I asked, feeling more bewildered than ever.

He paced up and down, talking excitedly to himself; and I got bits of it like—

"Bateman Institute — millions — buys judges—buys lawyers—yes, by Jove! Why couldn't they do *that*, too?"

"What?" I asked.

"Shut up!" he snapped, and then he said—

"Look here, my friend, how long will it take me to get over to Poplar Island?"

I told him that with a fast motor-boat he ought to get there before nightfall.

"Right!" he said. "I'm going."

He called out for the warden to let him out of my cell, and just before going he said to me:

"I'm either the biggest idiot alive, or else I've got a story that will make the whole world sit up. This tale will be a knock-out!"

"What?" I begged him to tell me.

He saw the warden coming down the corridor and said to me hurriedly:

"Keep these two facts in your head, and in case anything should turn up to delay me use 'em in court: Professor Ivanoff left New York on the Florida Limited for Oriole on the night of June thirteenth. Ask what he was doing on the fifteenth of June at daybreak! Make them tell you—and don't forget the name of that negro, Maitland. I——"

Here the warden jangled his keys.

"Come out of it. You've been gassing there long enough."

"Just a minute," Levine asked him.

But the warden said he had to go off some place and made Levine leave me.

The fifteenth of June! That was six weeks ago. I couldn't see what that had to do with the case. For the next three days I racked my brains as to how that would help me. I guess if Levine hadn't turned up I never would have succeeded in making our lawyer put those questions. But three days later I sat in the court, listening to the judge summing up the case for the jury, when Levine came in and did it himself.

It was a pretty exciting scene. Here we were just about on the edge of the grave; everything nicely set for the State; and along comes a little man who insists on asking some questions. The prosecuting attorney fought against them; said there was

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nothing new to be said on our behalf. The case must go on its way to the jury.

"It is highly irregular," admitted the judge, smiling tolerantly, "but at the same time I can not refuse to accept any evidence. The attorney for defense may submit it for record."

While his honor had been talking Levine had scribbled something on a sheet of paper, which he then passed over to our lawyer.

He called upon Joe.

"You say that Professor Ivanoff called this negro you mentioned, Maitland?"

"Yes," said Joe; "I heard them calling him that."

"You saw him clearly?"

"Why, yes; I've told you already I could have reached out and touched him."

"Did he have a scar, a big scar, running diagonally across his forehead, sloping down from the left?"

Joe thought a moment and then said:

"I don't know. He had something white tied round his head, something flat like a—like a bandage."

"Good!"

Our lawyer then handed Joe something which Levine had just passed up to him.

"Now here are five photographs. Do you see him among them?"

Joe looked them over carefully and then shook his head. Our lawyer looked pleased at that, and then handed him two more.

"Is he one of those?"

"Sure!" said Joe, holding one up. "That's him."

There was quite a little stir at that; and every one in the room watched our lawyer as he marked that one with his pencil. I chanced to look at Percy J. Prince; and if ever I saw a man looking puzzled it was he.

"Your honor," said our lawyer, "was there not a negro hanged in this county for murder on the fifteenth of June? A negro named Maitland?""

"There was," said the judge.

"Is it not the custom in this State to have, aside from the man who pulls the drop, two witnesses to any execution—the sheriff and doctor? Is that not so?"

The judge nodded his head.

"Very well," said our man. "Might I have the names of the two witnesses to the hanging of Joshua Maitland?"

In the stillness that followed that request every one in the court heard the gruff whisper of Percy J. Prince to the prosecuting attorney—

"Object!"

The judge looked over his glasses at Prince in a pained sort of manner, as if to say that this was going too far, and overruled the objection as soon as it was made. As soon as the prosecutor sat down Prince began talking furiously to him.

There was a low hum of talk all over the room; and when the record clerk read out the two names of the men who had seen Maitland destroyed by the State it broke into a babble of excitement.

The doctor had been Professor Ivanoff.

Our lawyer stood there, smiling; and as soon as order had been restored he turned to the judge.

"Your honor, I will ask you to look at this photograph; it is the Bertillon of Joshua Maitland."

He passed up the photo that Joe had identified, and the judge glanced at it obediently.

"Thank you," said our lawyer; and then he handed the judge another photograph—an enlargement—about a foot and a half square.

"Can you see a resemblance, your honor?"

I wish I could make you see what we all saw come over the face of that judge. First he just looked sort of officially bored, then curious, and then mad—just as though some one was trying to play a trick on him. Then he took the two photos, held them side by side, and a look of absolute horror came into his eyes. We watched, just like one would look at a movie.

When he spoke it was in a sort of a daze.

"Who took this picture?"

With that question the whole procedure of the case seemed to change; there was a hush just like one feels in a crowd that's watching some bad accident. A sort of awful curiosity. Levine stood up and answered the judge:

"It was taken last night, your honor, in the swamp on Poplar Island by a wild-animal photographer. We set a flash-powder on a trap-wire—just the way George Shiras takes his deer pictures—and you see what we caught on the plate! It shows where Professor Ivanoff took one liberty too many with the devolution of man. From simian to man is all right; but not from man to——"

At this juncture Prince literally hurled

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himself across to the judge and began talking as if it was his own life he was trying to save; and I guess the people of that State are still talking about that sudden adjournment.

And that was the end of the case; it never appeared again in the papers. Not a word. It was just as if Percy J. Prince—and his money—had said to the press of the world: "Here! forget it! It was all a bad dream——"

"It's no use," said Levine, who came down to see us off on the *Panther*. "I've lost the beat of a lifetime. The world's greatest story is climbing the trees of that island——"

BEHIND THE LINES

by Hervé Schwedersky

I HAD just finished a tour of the battlefields, complete with guide; we dug up a German helmet or two and gazed at the factories and villages growing out of the piles of wreckage and waste. People were hustling, hammering, singing and laughing.

In the Champagne and Verdun sectors I saw some very wonderful, deep and well-organized trenches, or at least they impressed me as such now that no shells were whizzing overhead. I visited the dingy *estaminets* where I used to order *vin rouge* and *cognac*, but I failed to enjoy them as I used to. Of course I saw a show at the Folies Bergère in Paris, reminding me of my short leaves while with the A. E. F. and as a whole I had a very successful trip.

I was now homeward bound, lounging in the smoke-room of the good S. S. *Leeland*, taking advantage of my last days of liberty to empty a bottle of "Mumm *Cordon Rouge* 1911" with a few of my friends.

We had emerged from the fog which kept closing in on us, clinging to the ship all through the English channel. We had silenced the fog-horn, shaken off the gloom and were now enjoying a wonderful evening, stars, moonlight, good liquor and everything——

Jean—or Monsieur le Capitaine de la Rochegrave, as the steward called him—was sitting next to me. He was an old friend, traveling for his pleasure, so he claimed, whom I was very pleased to find on board when we left Cherbourg. We had been room-mates in Paris before the war, when I had followed several courses at the Sorbonne.

I had always known him to be a gentleman, an awfully nice fellow, good racket, the proud possessor of a handsome black mustache and speaking English and German very well. He impressed me, however, as having exhanged his very jovial disposition for a rather gloomy one.

"I assure you," one of the party was insisting, "and you can trust my experience—that women are nothing but dolls, beautiful dolls, capable of but one sentiment, love."

Jean raised himself bruskly as if taking up a challenge.

"*Behind the Lines*," copyright 1923, by Hervé Schwedersky.

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"That would be enough in itself," he replied, "but women are our equals, our superiors I should say, in courage, initiative and resourcefulness in facing a desperate situation. Our superiors in every way."

He emptied his glass of champagne.

Jean seemed very much excited and we all listened intently.

"A woman really won this," he continued, pointing to a red dash at his buttonhole, the ribbon of the *Médaille de la Légion d'Honneur* which he was wearing with the emblem of the French *Croix de Guerre* and the British Military Cross.

"A girl, I should say, a wonderful girl; her name was Yvonne Marchand."

He stopped a while, hesitating. He looked dreamily into the clear night, over the sea where the moonlight was playing with the waves.

"Oh, I must tell this story; I can not keep it in me any longer. I will have to use fictitious names of places and persons, except hers; for it is not up to me to divulge the secrets of our Secret Service.

I SERVED during the first years of the war in the *Chasseurs Alpins*, "the blue devils" as we were called by our English-speaking allies (he began). I was lucky enough to pull through with but a few uninteresting holes in my person until Verdun, when I was badly gassed.

After my convalescence, that is, having recovered half of my old lungs, I was found unfit for further active duty, and was sent to Headquarters at Chantilly as a pen-pusher—*'un rond de Cuir'* as they say in France. This however soon gave me writer's cramp, and furthermore proved very trying on my uniform, so I succeeded after using a lot of pull in getting transferred to the *Deuxième Bureau*—the Secret Service.

A couple of months later I was sent on a special mission to Montreux, a delightful resort on Lake Geneva in Switzerland. I had a wonderful time there, dancing and flirting with the enemy agents, and what's more, my mission was a complete success.

I was recalled to Chantilly during the first days of July, 1918.

On the eighth of July, as I appeared in front of our commanding officer, Colonel Duvineau, to take my orders for the day's work, I was surprized by his worried expression. He waved me into a chair and sat silent, gazing at me critically from behind his bushy-black eyebrows. I was feeling very uncomfortable.

After a pause which to me seemed nearly eternal, he got up briskly and standing squarely in front of me, blurted out in his frank and gruff manner:

"I have a very important mission, a very dangerous one. We want to send a man behind the German lines. He is to get some detailed information on the impending attack in the Champagne sector. The chances of escape are slim, and you know the penalty. Do you accept?"

I managed to nod my head in assent.

"I thought so," said the colonel. "I have already sent your name in to the General Staff. You are to go to Fleuris, present Headquarters of the Second Division Prussian Guards. You will have to decide on the spot how to get this information. Le Commandant Rivert will give you full information on the town and a set of false papers. The daughter of the mayor of the village is reliable. A plane will be ready for you at Le Bourget, day after tomorrow night, eleven o'clock," and gripping my hand—

"Au revoir, mon ami, et bonne chance."

I was out of his office, walking automatically toward my friend *le commandant*.

My thoughts? I was proud of having been picked. But—even if I succeeded, my only chance of escape was to reach the Swiss or Dutch borders, traveling by night, hiding during the day. Yes, my chances were slim, as the colonel had said. And you know there is quite a difference between obeying an order at the front where bullets and shells become a disagreeable habit, and walking knowingly to a firing squad——

I had accepted.

The *commandant* embraced me as I entered, and his handshake was even warmer and friendlier than usual.

He had lived at Fleuris several years, and gave me invaluable information on the villages and the layout of the land.

We then called our most expert forger, and I soon had a regular set of papers, properly stamped and viséd by the German authorities, bearing my description, and complete in every detail. These we made from *bona fide* papers and information furnished by refugees who had been recently repatriated.

I had assumed the name of Paul Deschamps, a farmer who lived a few miles from Fleuris. Deschamps was also called to

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our office. He had been repatriated but a short while ago, and while his name was known in the village, he had been clever enough to keep away from the German Divisional Headquarters, where his repatriation was probably unknown. He was about my size and build, and I secured his clothes and shoes.

On the day set for departure, I told my family that I had been ordered to the south of France. They congratulated me on my good fortune. I had dinner at home—possibly my last one. Our old cook had prepared my favorite dishes. My little sister was smiling happily at me across the table, believing that her big brother was safe now, until the end of the war.

The entire room—all the old familiar things—seemed to join in this mock gaiety, laughing at my desperate efforts to smile, to play the part gamely; even the old bronze clock on the mantel-piece was ticking away joyfully my last few minutes at home. Home! How much it meant to me at that moment, with the dear faces of those I loved.

My mother's good humor alone seemed strained, as if she had sensed a hidden danger—as if she had seen through my stage smile, and struggled to play her part. How I longed to throw my arms around her, and tell her the truth. But it was impossible, my orders were strict, and then anything to spare her those agonizing days, weeks maybe of anxiety. If the worst happened, it was time enough for my family to learn then.

I finally tore myself away, and proceeded to the Aviation Field of Le Bourget, which is but a short distance from Paris. There I found my friend *le commandant*. I had made up my mind, if I did not come back—*eh bien, tant pis*.

At 10:30 I entered the hangar, and put on Paul Deschamps' clothes. A pair of heavy velvet trousers, red flannel belt, old black vest over a blue shirt, a pair of hobnail shoes and a black cloth cap completed my disguise.

Le commandant smiled.

"You missed your vocation, *mon ami*, you should have been a partner of Mistinguett or Lavallière."

"Lavallière is in a convent and Mistinguett is not *mon genre*," I replied.

I then strapped my parachute on my back and to a strong belt under my armpits, tied a small wicker basket containing two carrier pigeons to my belt, and having embraced *le commandant*, climbed into my seat in the airplane.

I believe it was a Nieuport with a captured Mercedes motor, so as not to be detected when flying behind the German lines. My pilot was the famous Vedrin, one of the pioneers in aviation, who had made the dropping of allied agents behind the enemy lines his specialty. The doors of the hangar were thrown open, helpers pulled us out, cranked the motor and off we went.

The sound of the motor was deafening; black fantastic shadows rushed by at tremendous speed, and then we rose, gliding through the moonlight. The wind was brushing against my face in an orgy of speed. We were rising rapidly in big circles. The Seine River shone and sparkled like a huge silver snake lazily stretching itself. Paris lay below, gloomy and dark but for the occasional glitter of a tramway rail or a zinc roof.

We were still climbing, straight to heaven it seemed, and we were now dodging between silver clouds with deep, greenish-blue shadows. On and on we traveled, high—very high, out of range of the anti-aircraft guns.

Suddenly far below between the clouds I saw a red glare, like stupendous fireworks—the Front. Already it had disappeared, swallowed in the distance, and once more we were alone between the bright stars, the shining moon above and below the rolling silver and blue clouds, like the gigantic waves of a sea of dreams. We then plunged in its clinging whiteness. We came down, and the black earth seemed to be rushing towards us.

We finally reached the spot selected for my landing. It was a small patch of woods a few miles from Fleuris. We circled over the spot a few minutes until, the moon having disappeared behind the clouds, I jumped off.

I dropped—how far, I do not know, but it seemed that the parachute would never open. My stomach felt as if it were being wrenched up in my chest; the pain was acute. I half-lost consciousness.

I was brought to by a violent tug of the straps about my shoulders and chest. I was swaying back and forth in the wind, and the dark patch of woods was raising itself slowly as if to swallow me. The moon

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had now emerged from behind the clouds. Could I ever escape detection under the bright rays of light?

MY LEGS brushed against some leaves, a hard branch scraped my back. I groped blindly with my arms and succeeded in catching the limb of a tree. I climbed on, pulled in my parachute, and waited, listening.

A gentle breeze was ruffling the leaves, somewhere a nightingale was singing; but not a human sound. For half an hour I waited, holding my breath; then I climbed down.

Under some bushes I dug a hole with my hands in the soft, moist earth and buried the parachute, then I crawled under another thicket, and lying down, waited for dawn.

The pale gray light of dawn was filtering through the trees. I woke up with a start. A damp mist was rising from the ground, a cock in the distance was heralding the rising of the sun. Pink and violet smeared the thin, white clouds above, and the leaves on the tree-tops turned rusty. A rabbit rushed by only a few yards away.

Crawling out of my hiding-place, I gave the pigeons some food, and hid the basket in some heavy underbrush near a big oak tree, where I could find it even at night. I carefully approached the road and hid near by, listening to the awakening of life around me.

At about seven o'clock I heard the heavy tramping of a column of troops—a regiment I guessed proceeding toward the front—but I did not dare to look. At about ten I carefully looked up and down the road; nobody in sight. Deliberately, I walked toward Fleuris.

It was a pretty village nestled at the foot of a small hill with its straight main street formed by the national road. Fruit-trees peeped out of the gardens between the gray square houses, a few of which climbed up the hill and scattered among the vineyards, with their green shutters and blue slate roofs. At the Grande Place I entered the Hôtel du Cheval Blanc, and sat down in the café:

After a very poor lunch—a few potatoes and some good German beer, the only food obtainable—I walked through the village to familiarize myself with the surroundings.

All around me, the turmoil and apparent excitement and disorder of military headquarters: a few inconspicuous civilians hurrying by on their business; officers and men in their greenish-gray field uniforms; staff officers spick and span; couriers rushing noisily back and forth on motorcycles; military cars covered with mud and dirt; long trains of motor-lorries and ammunition wagons rambling and clattering by; all converging to or from the Grande Place, a big square cut in two by the road, with a fountain and a couple of discouraged *plantain*-trees at one end.

On one side of this square, the old church built of gray-stone with but few sculptures, pointed its plain straight tower proudly, almost defiantly toward the sky. On top the Gallic cock still surmounted the cross. Opposite stood a large rectangular, two-story house, surrounded by a pretty garden. Wrought-iron balconies adorned the windows. A graveled driveway led through an iron gate to the door.

I recognized the house immediately from the *commandant's* description. The owner, M. Marchand had been Mayor of Fleuris for the last twenty years with the confidence and respect of all the villagers. During this period he had used his house as the Town Hall.

In August, 1914, when the village had been captured, the Germans had sent M. Marchand away as a hostage and converted his house into an officers' billet. This was the building now being used as headquarters of the Second Division Prussian Guards.

I once more entered my hotel, the typical country hostelry. The main room or café was dingy with smoke. A low ceiling; heavy, black, oak-beams; a red brick floor and a big open fireplace at one end surmounted by a crucifix.

The room was filled with German officers drinking wine and beer at wooden tables; they looked at me suspiciously, so I sat down in a dark corner. I dined from a portion of sausages and potatoes with acorn-coffee. The conversation around me was not particularly interesting from my standpoint, and being afraid of increasing their suspicion I went up to my room.

I was lucky; from my window I could see the court of the hotel. An old-fashioned well stood in the center and next to the court, separated only by a low wall with an open gate, extended the garden of M.

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Marchand's house. A sentry was pacing the garden.

It was still quite light, so I hid behind a shutter. From there I could see part of headquarters building. I was looking down through a window into a room where several junior staff officers were dining. From their behavior and the number of empty wine bottles it was apparent that they were celebrating.

Suddenly a pair of black shoes appeared in my range of vision and two slim, well-shaped ankles; a black dress followed as its wearer drew nearer the window, and then a white slender neck surmounted by a mass of brown, wavy hair. This, I thought, must be the mayor's daughter, Yvonne, who had remained during the occupation to look after her home.

She was passing back and forth serving the dinner, bringing more wine. She turned around showing a pair of dark eyes, a funny little nose and pretty red lips, over which a mocking smile seemed to be flitting. The men, already quite far gone in liquor, were darting covetous glances at Yvonne.

She was serving gravy, and as she passed, a young lieutenant caught her by the waist and tried to kiss her. She succeeded in slipping away, but spilt some gravy on his uniform and down his neck.

He jumped up, red with anger, rushed forward, seized the dish and emptied it over her, the thick reddish contents trickled down her cheeks and neck making blood-like stains on her black dress. His comrades burst out in uproarious laughter.

The door opened, the men jumped up at attention. The commanding officer, I guessed. He gave a curt order, and the lieutenant, hesitating and blushing, approached Yvonne who was standing aside, her small fists clenched, her eyes brilliant with suppressed tears. He bent forward, and kissed her on the cheek.

The men and even Yvonne smiled as he showed his face with his nose and lips smeared by the gravy. He then took a napkin, and awkwardly wiped her face and hair. She disappeared, the men sat down; an orderly finished serving the meal.

My blood was boiling; it was hard to sit there, watching this scene, and not be able to interfere. But what could I do? I could not forget my mission.

A few minutes later she came out of a back door with a pail, and passing through the gate, she went to the well in the hotel yard.

SUDDENLY it flashed into my mind that this was the opportunity for which I was waiting. Colonel Duvineau had told me she was reliable. I hurried down to the court. She was sitting on the side of the well, her head bent. She jumped up with a start when she heard me. Tears were running down her cheeks; they looked to me like pearls in the fading, pink light of sunset. I stopped, gazing at her.

"Who are you? What do you want?" she asked.

"Please don't cry, *mademoiselle*. It will be all over soon. Oh, it is terrible to see those tears, and not be able to assist you!"

"I am not crying." She raised her head proudly. "But who are you? What do you want of me?"

"A friend," and, grasping her hands, I looked straight in her large wondering eyes.

"Some time this evening or to morrow, some very important orders will reach headquarters."

I pointed to the house.

"I must get a copy of these orders. The fate of France may depend on my success. Is there some way I can enter that house, undetected? Can you help me?"

She nervously withdrew her hands, and hesitated a second.

"You must not be seen talking to me. Meet me here at ten o'clock when they change the guard. Remain in the shadow; carry your shoes in your hand."

She picked up the pail, and was gone. I returned to my room.

About half an hour later I heard heavy footsteps in the hall. They stopped before my door. It swung open, and a German M. P. entered.

"Where are your papers?" came the curt order.

I handed them over. He scrutinized them carefully.

"Hold up your hands."

I obeyed. My heart was pounding in my chest.

He searched me.

"What are you doing here?"

"*Herr Offizier*," I replied in broken German, "I just came to town to get some repair parts for my plow and some seeds. You see, I need them to raise food, and I thought it was all right to come."

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"Well, you had better not let me find you here tomorrow. Before leaving, stop at the *kommandantur* to reclaim your papers, and by ——, you leave the mayor's daughter alone."

He left the door open.

This meant that within twelve hours my real identity would be discovered. To-night was my only chance.

It was plain that Yvonne had not betrayed me. I had been seen talking to her, and this had aroused the *gendarme's* suspicion. I waited impatiently, fearing that Yvonne would be watched, and prevented from helping me.

A FEW minutes before ten I heard the footsteps of the new guard coming up the road. They stopped in front of headquarters. I took off my shoes, and stole silently down-stairs to the yard. Crouching in the shadows, I followed the wall to the gate.

The sentry was at the opposite end of the garden.

"Give me your hand and follow!" ordered a faint whisper.

A small moist hand gripped my wrist. I followed. We crossed the garden, climbed three steps, passed through a dimly lighted kitchen into a dark hall.

We reached a corner.

"Wait here."

She brushed past me.

A few minutes went by. Interminable minutes! My breathing sounded to me like the exhaust of a steam-engine. In the rooms all around people were moving, conversing in German. A skirt brushed against my leg. I felt a warm breath against my cheek. The little hand caught mine, and led me up a flight of stairs into a room, and again left me.

I heard the door close; the key turn in the lock. The curtains were pulled together, a match was struck, and fantastically lighted by its reddish glow I recognized the pretty features of Yvonne's face. She lighted a candle, then coming back to me—

"I am not such a bad guide after all," she whispered, laughing silently.

"You must now tell me who you are."

I told her briefly. She was convinced.

"Now, *monsieur l'espion*, to work."

She walked to the open fireplace, and after displacing two bricks, leaned over toward me with a smile.

"*Poste d'écoute*—from here you can hear everything that takes place in the room below, the general's office."

"I should think that you were a marvelous little spy," I answered.

She shook her head.

"I just know what repairs are necessary in my old home."

All the time despite the danger her lips wore a faint smile, and her eyes sparkled in the dim light.

I sat on the floor in the fireplace with a notebook and pencil.

AT ABOUT a quarter past eleven a motorcycle stopped noisily in front of headquarters. I heard the footsteps entering the room below, the heels clicked as the courier came to attention. An envelope was torn open, and the paper crackled as the message was pulled out. There was a scraping of chairs on the floor below as the men stood up.

Somebody cleared his throat and after an instant of silence—one could feel that the speaker was taking a deep breath—a voice rang out, harsh and brutal.

"The orders have just arrived. The last big attack will take place the fourteenth of July, at four o'clock in the morning. The Second Division Prussian Guards has been assigned to a post of honor along the line. We will live up to our reputation and our tradition. Every man in the Division will be proud to do his duty. The end is now in sight; this is our last effort. *Hoch! Hoch! Hoch!* to our Kaiser and our *Vaterland!*"

Loud cheers broke out, swelled and died away, drowned in the tinkling of glasses.

Followed the long reading of detailed orders, and then the general dictated his instructions for the movements of the different regiments. I had taken everything down, and now as I proceeded to condense my notes and transfer them to two very thin sheets of paper, I could hear below the buzzing and noise of feverish work; the pounding of typewriters, shouting of orders. Outside courier after courier hurried away on motorcycles.

I was half-through my work when a footstep climbed the stairs, and approached along the hall. It stopped in front of the door an instant as if hesitating, then it went on. A moment later, a door slammed.

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Yvonne whispered in my ear—

"The general."

Oh! How, in this tension and silence, those footsteps sounded painfully in my ears. I could sense those boots pounding, pounding all around, below, above, everywhere, now faintly, hushed and mysterious, ghost-like, now loud and clattering, and I could feel the scraping of the nails against the floor. Footsteps, always menacing, followed by doors opening stealthily and slamming loudly.

I sat back to work, but my hand was shaky.

I had now finished, and I listened for the last time. I shuddered. The junior officers were drinking down-stairs, and from their conversation I understood that they were playing dice. The winner was to have the honor of saying "good night" to Yvonne. They laughed drunkenly. I looked around. Yvonne had heard. She seemed a bit paler.

"You must hide," she said, "but where?"

Her gaze went around the dark room.

"And you?" I asked.

"Oh, don't worry about me. I know how to handle them."

The footsteps had started up the stairs.

Suddenly she took off her shoes and stockings, slipped on her nightgown over her dress, and loosened her hair, which fell in heavy brown curls over her shoulders. My blood was pounding in my ears. The footsteps had stopped in front of the door. She turned to me—

"Jump in bed, cover yourself up as much as possible, your face away from the door, and snore in German."

Somebody was trying to open the door, and, finding it locked, kicked it.

Yvonne thumbed the candle, went to the door and opened it.

I could sense somebody trying to push his way in, stammering something about saying "good night," and wanting to apologize for having been so rude earlier in the evening.

Yvonne replied in a loud whisper—

"You are a bit late, my friend, and you had better be careful not to wake up the general."

I turned around, and breathed loudly.

I could hear the heels snap together as the men automatically straightened to attention, and the footsteps tiptoed away.

Having locked the door, Yvonne came back. I rose and lighted the candle.

A door closed, somebody was walking in the room above.

My heart was thumping, my nerves were stretched to the breaking point. I felt dizzy.

Footsteps, always footsteps, footsteps, boots pounding amidst drunken laughter, sentries circling around with level guns and a still white figure, standing erect before fantastic, grotesque shadows, while under the dancing candle-light, reddish, flame-like tints crept up the white gown, and spots of burnished gold sparkled dully in the dark brown hair. A far-away look of triumph gleamed in the eyes.

Jeanne d'Arc!

I dropped on the bed and closed my eyes. The vision disappeared, melted away.

When I looked up, having regained my self-control, Yvonne was dressed. She came and sat next to me.

"You will have to wait," she said, "for the next change of guard at two o'clock; it's the only chance of escape. I will lead you through the rear garden——"

"But Yvonne, I can not leave you here. Tomorrow at the *kommandantur* they will discover that I was a spy. They will suspect you. You know what it means; we must flee together."

"Sh. Sh——"

She placed a finger on my mouth.

"I must stay here. If I left they might shoot my father. And I have my work, Jean. It's so wonderful to be able to help the men of military age and the escaped prisoners to reach the Dutch border and freedom, despite the police and their network of spies and traps. Think, it means so many more soldiers for France."

A worried expression clouded her face, as she went on.

"*Hélas!* Several of the service were caught lately; the chain is broken, and I have lost contact with the next link. They have been hot on our trail, ever since a traitor sold several of us to the enemy. But we will carry on to the last, we will fill the missing posts and reestablish the service."

"But, Yvonne, it means almost certain death. Come, you have already done more than your share. And think of those who may care for you."

She stood up.

"There is no such thing as any one person's share, or personal feelings, when the fate of our country, of France, is at stake.

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Your duty is to see that the information you were able to secure, reaches your chiefs. Mine is to stay here and carry on to the bitter end, if need be."

Automatically, I stood up at attention, and saluted.

THE silence was broken by the bells of the church clock striking one. The maddening, mysterious noises in the house had gradually died down, and only the sentry's heavy footsteps on the gravel in the garden could be heard.

Yvonne blew the candle out, and going to the window, opened it noiselessly. A gush of fresh air blowing the curtains apart, filled the room with the scent of the country. It felt good; it caressed my burning face.

I felt her sitting against me on the bed. For a few minutes, we tried to forget, to chase the nightmare away.

Silently we spoke of peace and happiness, and Spring and flowers, and the ripe golden grapes in Autumn, of the cozy Winter evenings, sitting by the warm open hearth. We talked of beautiful lanes on the hills near by, where she used to roam and dream; lanes filled with the songs of birds and the fragrance of wild flowers.

We rambled through silent forests, following long, straight roads, bordered by tall trees that diffused the brilliant sunshine; roads that seemed to lead to a hazy blue paradise in the distance. We spoke of Paris where she had never been.

Seated in the Jardin des Tuileries we watched a red sun slowly disappear in the mist of a November afternoon, passing through the arch of the Arc de Triomphe and scattering its last purple and red rays along the Champs Élysées and frame in scarlet the obelisk of the Place de la Concorde. We rambled along the Seine in the shadows of Notre Dame, looking at the old books displayed in long lines of cases along the parapets of the *quais*.

She asked about me and listened to the tale of my dreams and ambitions when a young engineer just out of Central, I set out to conquer the world. She laughed at my wild parties, at the onion soup at six o'clock in the morning in dirty restaurants around the *Halles*, the Central Market, sitting in evening clothes next to a sweaty stevedore or an ill-smelling peddler, turned disdainfully away from the p of the fashionable teas, where just a bored I would bow over well-mani hands.

The church clock struck a quarter to The sentry was still walking his beat garden. Yvonne nestled close to another instant and stood up. The was over. The purring of an airplan tor, far up in the sky intensified the the gruesome reality.

Slowly she closed the window and the candle. Going to a cupboard brought back a German officer's long and cap.

"You will need it," after a pause will be safer for you to try and reach Swiss border. I will take you to the wall; jump over; follow it to a small it opens from the inside. In the street to your left, it leads to a munition Take the second turn on your right spot is marked by a big elm tree. You join the main road just below the Bois Fleuris, where you landed."

She looked up at me; her hand rested my arm.

"I am terribly sorry I can not help more, Jean. But when it's all over *will* come back; won't you?"

She turned her gaze away, and blushed slightly:

"You are the only man I have seen four years whom—I could talk to—frankly You are almost a *Prince Charming* as in fairy tales you dropped from the on a moonbeam; just for an instant."

Words failed me to express my feelings my admiration, my gratitude. I took hand, and managed to mumble:

"I swear to come back—and, Yvonne *merci*."

The sentry was in front of the gate waiting for the new guard to relieve him slipped on the cape and cap.

"Don't forget your shoes." She said faintly.

Once more the little hand grasped mine and led me down into the garden, around bushes to the rear wall.

I looked up at the church; under a of moonlight the cock of *Gaule*, perched top of its black steeple, glittered and sp kled against the running clouds; for an stant he seemed to come to life, to flap wings and stretch his proud head to

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ens; I could almost hear him sing—
the dawn of the rising sun of victory.
owered my gaze and saw Yvonne, her
erect, her mouth set and a far-away
of triumph in her eyes.
ce more I saluted, and just the same
iter pinning a medal on the breast of a
, I embraced her and whispered—
In the name of all my comrades, the
iers of France!"
er lips met mine.
he was gone, swallowed in the darkness.

THE carrier pigeons delivered their valuable messages safely.

My instinct, the instinct of the hunted, the tracked animal, led me to safety, sneaking on at night through deserted passes and roads, avoiding houses and villages, living on raw vegetables stolen in the fields.

I reached the Swiss border. There I learned of the failure of the German attack in Champagne, and of the mighty onslaught of the Allies, rushing forward to victory.

DAMON AND PYTHIAS

***by* Gordon Seagrove**

SHE'S a dirty, rusty kettle,
She's a steamin' clankin' 'ack,
But she gets us into Cardiff
An' then she gets us back.

A Scotsman runs 'er black gang,
An' me—I runs the deck;
So we spoof the old Atlantic
An' we step upon its neck.

The rivets in 'er boilers—
They gets looser every day;
'Er crankshaft's like an 'airpin,
But it thumps 'er on her way.

Her compasses are crazy,
An' 'er steerin' gear is worse,
An' to bump 'er through a Norther
Takes a doctor an' a nurse.

So I lets the Scotsman doctor—
With the berinks like as not—
While I coax 'er up the green 'uns;
I'm the only nurse she's got.

There are times we ought to sell her,
An' the Scotsman says it's so;
But I guess we're bit o' balmy,
For we never lets 'er go.

She's a bit of rum an' lousy,
She's an 'opeless sort of pot,
But—God 'elp 'er—she's our baby
An' the only berth we've got.

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HURRICANE WILLIAMS' VENGEANCE

A Four-Part Story — Part One

by Gordon Young

Author of "Horrezko," "Wrong Blood—Strong Blood," etc.

IT WAS not quite by chance that McGuire and Delaney met Captain Pete Mathers. They were stopping quietly in a village on Lele Island, the track of traders in the Carolines, when they heard that a white man, with a crew of Solomon Islanders, was at the north side of Kusaie on a schooner.

They went over in a fishing canoe and found Mathers lying on a mat in the shade of a breadfruit-tree in front of a house with three or four natives soggy from drink near by. His head was in a fat woman's lap, and she nodded drowsily though Mathers was singing. One of his knees formed a peak that supported the other leg. He swung a bare foot up and down, beating time for his song.

"The lordly white man," said McGuire to Delaney, who was a huge, red, hairy Irishman, with a high temper and a broad brogue.

"Yis. The image ov his maker Oi bet—the divil."

McGuire carried a shotgun, such as was used for pigeon-shooting, muzzle down across his forearm, and came almost to Mathers before he saw that some one was near.

He sat up quickly and stared hard. He had not known there were white men about. His eyes went back and forth from McGuire to Delaney, both of whom had a sort of tired, alert, intense look, and at first they watched him warily. His revolver was in its holster, lying by his shoes, just beyond arm's reach.

McGuire and Delaney had lately come by a distinction that is not often attained by men of worthier lives. Their names had become known half-around the world; they had been mentioned even in the British Parliament; there was hardly a missionary society on earth that had not discussed them, and every beach-comber, trader, blackbirder, planter and skipper from Singapore to Capetown knew of them. Her Imperial Majesty, Victoria of England, had within the past few months offered one thousand good yellow guineas for their bodies, dead or alive; and three thousand for that of the sea captain called "Hurricane" Williams. However, no one, not even McGuire and Delaney, knew where Williams could be found.

But now it was Mathers who showed fear, and at first he appeared about to jump backwards and make off.

The fat native girl grinned drunkenly and held to his arm to keep him from leaving her. She knew that whenever he left her he usually went over to the house of one Buli and talked with that old father of pigs about a shameless, turtle-headed girl that lived in Buli's hut.

"What's the matter?" said McGuire in an easy voice, but his tone had a bit of an edge, and his smile was the smile of a gambler as he watches the dice fall.

"I thought I knew you," Mathers answered a little doubtfully.

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ll, ye don't!" said Delaney.
," Mathers agreed readily, almost too
. "I don't. But some years ago I
me trouble with some fellows and at
—"

see," said Delaney. "Ye thought we
omebody as knew you. We don't
nybody. It be not good manners in
rt ov the earth."

hers grinned through his beard and
d heavily. He wanted to be friendly,
east not to have trouble while his own
er was many feet away.

re was a good deal of whisky-fat on
ers, which is a bad thing to have in the
s. His belly sagged like a leather
-bottle, half-filled. He had too much
t for his bones and this made him slow
vement and heavy on his feet; but he
he sort of man who could keep his feet
vaggle his tongue when another man
l be under the table.

thers' skin was red, his hair was red,
eard was red. He wore white, cotton
ers and a sleeveless undershirt. A
revolver in its flap-holster lay off to one
of the mat by his hat and shoes. His
rms were crudely tattooed, and he had
h down the back of his neck. He was
st vain of this scar. A woman had
d him. With his fingers feeling along
rack-like mark he would cock an eye,
draw up a side of his face as he winked.
talked much of the women he had
n, and lied in the talking of them.

athers brought out a whisky-bottle
under the mat behind the girl, and they
quatted together, talking.

ie girl was not old, twenty at most, but
idy she was going to seed—getting fat.
face was broad with dark, vague eyes;
nose was thick, her lips were thick, and
hed flowers that had fallen from her
e hair lay about her. She wore a thick,
s girdle and glass beads, and her body
e the impression of having been molded
ark dough.

She's not much," said Mathers, slapping
shoulder with a blow that the girl took
affection and which caused her to grin
n satisfaction toward McGuire, who sat
like a man that has all the time in the
ld. But he was turning this Mathers
de out, like a pocket, and shaking him.
Vith his arm on the shoulder of the
man, Mathers told them about another
that he had seen. She was, he said, the
prettiest thing that ever drove a man crazy. But she had a shriveled-up old villain of an uncle who knew her value. The uncle talked English—Business English. Mathers talked of him with hearty oaths. The old uncle had been on a whaler, on blackbirders, on a plantation. White men had ruined him, utterly ruined him! Made him into a villainous old bargainer who didn't care a whoop for beads, tinned meats, cheap knives, or painted knickknacks. For a hundred dollars, five cases of whisky, one case of tobacco, and three rifles with a hundred shells for each, the old fellow would promise to speak—speak, mind you!—to the girl, of Mathers' generous heart and handsome appearance.

"I've offered to marry her," said Mathers with the aggrieved air of one whose excellent intentions are misunderstood. "I would too," he added with a confidential fall in his tone. "She's not like a nigger."

II

MATHERS said that he was a trader, one of the W. W. traders.

"W. W." had formerly stood for Winston Willerby, who in the early days had built up by trading, by plantations and by blackbirding, the greatest fortune in the South Seas. He had been a fighter and a grabber; but after his death following some years of total blindness brought on by an injury, his son controlled the fortune.

But "W. W." had come to mean the Willerby business, which for some time, even before old Willerby's death, or even before the blow that blinded him, had been on the decline.

In the old days the Willerbys had had everything their own way. There were few missionaries, no labor-recruiting laws, not many independent traders, and these were easily driven out and often killed by savages whose skins were no blacker than the sun will make any other white man's. In those old days most of the white men had been runaways from whalers, and escaped convicts that floated about the South Seas, lodging here and there like flotsam pitched ashore; and Willerby had used these men as his men, and they had hesitated at nothing that gratified their own passions and made money for him.

Willerby blackbirders had even frequently raided villages, shooting and burning, and

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carrying off the men and women they caught. For years and years and years England had dumped the worst criminals she had in her on Australia, where they were starved and beaten and herded to back-breaking work in chains; and when they were turned loose or broke away they often took to the bush or to the islands. And Willerby had used them.

For that matter he had to use them. There were none others at hand, and he saw the chance to build up his great business; and there were few people that cared, possibly excepting the natives; and in the early part of the century people with black skins had been regarded in practically all the civilized countries as animals, to be captured, owned, sold. When naval vessels would kidnap women off the islands for their crews, it was not to be expected that much attention was given Willerby's methods of establishing trade and securing labor.

But gradually conditions changed. Missionaries and native teachers spread all through the islands, and sent out reports that damaged and angered the Willerbys; and independent traders crowded in and could not be bullied or frightened out; and before his death Willerby saw labor-recruiting laws passed, with British agents and gunboats looking on to see that they were obeyed. They were not, of course; but the agents and gunboats were at least troublesome.

After his death Willerby's son carried on the business as nearly in the manner of the old traditions as he dared. Competition was insistent, expenses heavier, and he did not have his father's ability for organization and handling men; and what had been in old Willerby a sort of baronial brutality, a kind of ruthless manner of conquest, became in the son a mere cunning cruelty. Old Winston Willerby would knock a rival down with his fist and kick him into submission; Slade Willerby would shoot him.

III

IT WAS now an odd group under the breadfruit-tree.

All three white men were red-headed, two had red beards.

Delaney was a big rough-appearing fellow with small sharp eyes under red, protruding brows. Toward strangers he was often truculent, even ferocious, without being quarrelsome. Among friends he would loosen up and tell queer yarns; and his friendship was to be desired above pearls and rubies, and that which is the most delightful and least valuable of all, love of women.

He wore a broad-rimmed felt hat that was pinned to the crown in front; his shirt was of faded, blue cotton and the trousers were of canvas. The belt around his waist was as wide as from the tip of his fingers to the heel of his palm, and made of shark's skin. He had made this himself, catching the shark and tanning the skin. The belt was not buckled, but laced. It had two pockets that also laced shut, and fitted to the belt was a sheath of shark's skin in which was a long knife with a black handlein laid with iridescent bits of pearl-shell.

Delaney had forged the blade, carved and fitted the handle, fished the shell he used for inlay; and no man puts in so much labor and love on a tool that he hesitates to use.

McGuire was lean and angular, with an air of laziness. His eyelids had a sleepy droop, and his voice was deceptively slow, almost gentle.

Most people had said that he was worthless, and some that he was worse than that, long before he became infamous through the murder of Bishop Johnston.

But it was generally known that McGuire was one of very few men who seemed able to go among the Melanesian savages and reappear with his head on his shoulders. This was generally thought to have been because he had sailed so long with Hurricane Williams, the pirate whom even the low, black, treacherous poison-users of the Santa Cruz Islands respected.

Missionaries reported, as further instance of the savages' need of enlightenment, that whenever they found a village where Williams was known, no matter in what group of islands—east or west—among the gentle, affectionate, cheerful natives, or among the ugly man-eaters—he was talked of with approval; and they found also that wherever he had been he left warning among the natives that they should expect to be cheated, always, when they dealt with white men—and missionaries no less than others.

Missionaries had long persistently complained of Williams. For that matter, so had blackbirders and many of the most

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godless of planters. He had often done things that made his name ring amid the oaths of ship owners. In addition to the big reward that years before had been offered, and never withdrawn, by the Willerbys—it was in a fight with Williams' ship that old Winston Willerby had been blinded—which had kept traders and the blackbirders on the look-out for him, he had repeatedly been searched for as a pirate by the naval vessels of each government that had trading interests in the South Seas.

But the gunboats when they caught up with him had not always remembered the experience with satisfaction. He had succeeded in wrecking one; he had land-locked another by dynamiting a cliff so that tons of rock fell into a narrow channel.

Frequently he fought with blackbirders, and he had stolen a ship now and then. But all along until the comparatively recent murder of missionaries on the *Good Shepherd*, many of the people who knew the most about him had been a little sympathetic.

The gunboats that he tricked and trapped had been German, whose commanders were previously pretty high-handed in dealing with some island captains that were not "pirates"; the blackbirders had usually been engaged in kidnaping natives that were friendly to Williams; and the ships he stole had invariably belonged to men that owed him for shell or who had tried some piece of treachery.

It was known, or at least commonly believed, that this audacious, desperate fellow, who was frequently called "the last of the pirates," was in reality a man of high family connections who as a wealthy young traveler had, in his own yacht, visited Australia and been fascinated by a beautiful adventuress. However, at the time, this dazzling woman had been inconvenienced by the presence of a husband.

The story went that she had cleverly disposed of this husband, and in such a way as to make it appear for a time that his death was accidental; but later the police closed in on her with evidence that proved murder, and she, with ready cleverness, maintained an appearance of complete innocence, but furnished information that fastened the guilt on her new husband; and he was hanged.

This woman, so it was whispered by those who keep scandal alive, afterward became famous as Lania DuBeque, wicked, beautiful, audacious; and the only woman that ever held Winston Willerby under her heel. She knew how to manage him, which no other woman ever did, though many tried. But a native girl slashed the face of the irresistible Lania DuBeque, and her magic spell over men was broken.

There is a kind of good luck that shows its grain even in misfortunes; and though her beauty was destroyed, Willerby met with his injury before he saw her, and his blindness prevented him from ever realizing this. She remained his friend and close companion until his death; and—so it was said—had stored up jewels and money until no woman in that part of the world had anything like her wealth.

The legend that had gathered about Williams' name was that after he was hanged the convicts detailed to bury him in the prison yard discovered that a flicker of life remained; so, merely out of eagerness to cheat the gallows, they managed to hide him in a pile of lumber.

He later escaped from the prison and, disgraced, embittered, a man who had been hanged and officially buried, unable to resume his name or claim any of his friends, hating the world and all who were in it, he had gone to live among the lowest of savages in the Santa Cruz Islands. Even there he had been harassed by white men.

Blackbirders, when unable to entice natives on board, occasionally would run down a canoe that they found far off shore, then would help the natives over the side—and slam them into the hold. Williams had been in a canoe that was run down; but he and his savages, when they had scrambled over the side, took the blackbirders by surprize and after a sharp, quick, bloody fight, captured the ship.

Then having a ship of his own, he began his wandering up and down, and in and out of the islands, endlessly roaming, like a man with Christ's own curse on him, hating all his race; a man of culture, yet choosing to surround himself with blacks to whom his word was powerful as witchcraft; an outlaw, pirate, white-cannibal—so he was called—though he was as rigorously ascetic as a desert saint; a man of perpetual and indomitable energy, yet thwarted in almost every endeavor, as if by his curse. He trusted no white man, except occasionally discovering such a one as McGuire, or Delaney, who let women alone, and had no

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love of money—which is the vilest of lusts.

McGuire, who knew him better than he was known by any one else, found that Williams had a mad sense of justice. In fact, McGuire believed that he was streaked with madness; his eyes seemed filled with a kind of piercing madness; and the way he drove himself, appearing never to sleep, never to rest, his manner of seeming always at the verge of anger and the tense, fierce repression with which he held himself, or his sudden fierceness and headlong hurtling when he let himself go, was very like a kind of madness.

IV

"I HEAR," said McGuire to Mathers, "your boys are Solomon Islanders."

Mathers eyed him doubtfully, wiped the mouth of the bottle against his palm, then nodded—and took a long drink, all the while keeping his eyes on McGuire.

"Going or coming?"

"Going back. Stopped here to do a bit of business, y'know."

"Well, captain, we want to get to the Solomons."

Mathers answered quickly:

"Sorry fellows. Sorry, but I can't take you."

Mathers said it friendlily enough, but with an air of ending the matter. Then he playfully slapped the fat girl, which caused her to snicker and giggle happily. Apparently he had lost interest in McGuire and Delaney; at least he tried to give them the feeling that they might as well leave him.

McGuire had a slow gentle voice. He spoke softly—

"We'll pay for a passage."

Mathers looked around with a nip of chill in his manner. He did not like this suggestion of theirs about taking passage with him. He did not want a quarrel on his hands, but he wanted them to feel that it was useless to urge him.

"No, I told you, no! Isn't that plain enough?" Then he became aware of Delaney's scowling stare. He added—

"Can't you fellows understand I'd be glad to do it, but I can't take you."

"Why not?"

"It's against orders, carrying passengers."

"Is it?"

"Yes."

"Whose orders, captain?"

"Slade Willerby's."

"Queer. I wonder why?" said McGuire.

"Well you see—hmm—Willerby's a queer fellow. Mighty queer. And—hmm—well he found people were going about with his traders—fellows that sort o' checked up on the W. W. business. You know—found out trade secrets. He wouldn't have it any more. He said no trader was ever to carry any more strangers. S'help me, that's right."

"Is it really?" said McGuire in a way that was hard to tell precisely what he meant.

"I said so!"

Mathers glared. McGuire's way of speaking had stung him, and he was pretty well filled with whisky. Besides, he did not intend to have those fellows on board.

McGuire carelessly shifted the shotgun. The movement appeared unconscious, but Mathers added with sudden change of tone:

"Yes fellows, I've explained just how it is. I can't take you."

Captain Pete Mathers was an out-and-out ruffian, on whom at one time old Willerby himself had looked with a kindly eye, for Mathers was tricky, he lied well, and was not squeamish; but the years in the tropics, whisky, fat and women had slowed him down. However a good deal of craftiness remained, though much of it was the sort that tries to fool people by confidential winks, friendly nudges in the ribs, the intimacies of boozing.

He had said that he was in the Carolines to do a little trading. That had a better sound to his own ears than saying he had been drunk for a week during which time the schooner had been blown so far out of her course that, when he began to sober, he did not know where he was, and it was another two or three days before he was in shape to juggle with a reckoning. Besides himself there was no one but natives on board; and they also had helped themselves so liberally to stores that one had fallen overboard and another had died of whisky without the help of salt water.

It had been a bad mess; but the luck of the drunken was on the *Jack and Jill* so that she had blundered along without anything worse than a clutter of raffle over the decks. Probably the reason that the cannibal crew had not put Mathers into a stewpot was less out of friendliness for him than

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the fact that their only chance of ever getting home was to leave his head on his shoulders.

Mathers had not cared much where he was. His commission was of a nature, and he had an importance to Willerby that would make such excuses as he chose to offer acceptable to those who employed him. Mathers knew things, he did. Often in drinking by himself in his cabin he would sit and chuckle as if the cuddy were filled with unseen persons whom he mocked. And having found himself up in the Carolines he let go the anchor and came ashore, like the sea-weary voyager that he was, for a bit of fun before dropping down in the Solomons.

The arrival of McGuire and Delaney in the Carolines had been in a somewhat different manner, though they too were far off their course. For months they had been working their way across from Samoa toward the Solomons, and much of their traveling had been of a kind to give hardened seamen nightmarish shivers.

They had made long jumps from island to island in canoes, often alone. They had been hungry and thirsty and dizzy from the sun; they had been battered about like driftwood; they had beaten death by an inch, and a second, so many times that they hardly mentioned the incidents between them; they had gone through storms and calms, and had been pitched ashore through the surf.

Once at sea they had been swamped, the canoe overturning. Their native companion was lost, and everything in the canoe that was not lashed fast had been spilled like a propitiatory sacrifice to the waves. For ten hours they had clung in the water to the outrigger before the wind and sea gave them a fighting chance to get the craft righted. Then bailing while they held to the sides had been heart-breaking work for the waves broke over the partly submerged canoe, as over a water-soaked log.

They had done such things as Homer sang of in the greatest of all adventure tales, and had been as unconscious of heroism as old Ulysses himself; but they were merely rascals whom the queen in her wrath wanted to hang, and they were being sought for, because of the price on their heads, by gunboats that steamed about the islands to prevent head-hunting.

McGuire and Delaney knew that the safest place in the South Seas was for them a certain village on the southwest corner of New Georgia, one of the wildest and most savage spots of the earth; and they knew that it was there they would have the chance of rejoining Williams, whom they had not seen since the *Good Shepherd* massacre.

The *Good Shepherd* had been visiting missionary stations, and moving along a definite and easily ascertained course.

One day she had sighted a schooner that lay aback with an inverted Union Jack at the gaff. As the *Good Shepherd* drew near, a boat with ten or twelve natives and three white men put off from the schooner and approached.

Those on board the *Good Shepherd* thought that crew and officers were abandoning their schooner and stood by to receive them. But the rascals were no sooner over the side than they began yelling and shooting, and shouting out that they were pirates and swore to sink the blasted mission boat under the feet of all board.

"I am Hurricane Williams!" cried the ruffian leader. "Where is that blankety blank-blank meddler of a bishop? I want him!"

"Here!" said Bishop Johnston, a broad, erect man who had been a South Sea missionary for thirty years.

He now stepped forward with firm tread and steady glance.

"So you are that —— meddler! Take that—and that—and that!"

The bishop fell, shot through the heart and head. One of the bullets missed and struck a young woman, killing her. A young Scotch missionary dashed forward unarmed and tried to grapple with the ruffian, but one of the other white scoundrels shot him.

The ruffians jeered and cursed. It was evident that they were half-drunk; and after terrorizing the *Good Shepherd* for more than an hour, threatening to scuttle the ship, and warning those on board that missionaries all through the South Seas would be hunted out and murdered if they did not keep out of the islands, the ruffians withdrew—but not until they had broken into the stores and carried off such delicacies as took their fancies.

The two white men were repeatedly addressed as McGuire and Delaney by Hurricane Williams.

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The *Good Shepherd* returned at once to Sydney, and news of the outrage went through the world; and even in the British Parliament a speaker with great bitterness criticized Colonial affairs by remarking on the fact that for years Williams had been an out-and-out pirate, moving about apparently as he pleased, committing one depredation after another on defenseless ships and traders, inciting natives to treacherous violence, and now at last leading in the massacre of a missionary ship. Rewards were heaped on his head, and on the heads of McGuire and Delaney.

For all of its islands and immense distances, every trader knew every other trader, or knew of him, for the trading schooners and blackbirders bumped along from coast to coast, drinking a bottle of whisky and exchanging gossip with every trader and captain, so that news spread rapidly, and those who did not know McGuire or Delaney knew of them by description.

V

"WE ARE wanting to get down in the Solomons, captain, and I mentioned — didn't I? — that we can pay."

Mathers shook his head—

"Orders is orders."

"Who's to find out?" McGuire asked with a vague smile, absently stroking the black-walnut stock of the gun.

"Slade Willerby hisself. Somebody's goin' tell him. He's down in the Solomons now."

"Watching his traders, eh? To see that they don't carry passengers?"

"Yeah, he's watchin' traders—he's lookin' for a woman. Ooo-ee! Like his father that way, only worse."

"A Solomon Island girl? He is worse; much worse—that way."

"Solomon Islander, your eye! She's white as a saint, an' the prettiest girl in the world. Just like her mother was in the old days, only prettier, by thunder. Know who her mother is? DuBeque. That's who. Lania DuBeque. Cross between a tiger-shark and a wild-cat, that woman!"

"The daughter?"

"The mother. See that?"

Mathers twisted his body around, showing the back of his neck, and he ran his fingers along the scar—

"She done that."

He screwed up his face into a smirking grimace.

"Evidently the lady didn't want you to turn your back on her," said McGuire with a faint grin.

Mathers grunted—

"'T wasn't that—" he took another drink of whisky—"I hadn't done nothin.' "

He lapsed into a moment's thoughtfulness, as if looking back on the scene. The fat girl lay heavily against him; she dozed with her mouth adroop. Two or three of the natives sat by, huddled down on their haunches, peering vacantly, understanding nothing, waiting hopefully for a chance at the bottle. A native, sprawled flat on his face, slept. Another had staggered off.

"You hadn't done anything?" McGuire repeated with a rising inflection that suggested a high opinion of Captain Mathers's way with women.

Mathers chuckled hoarsely, pleased. He took a long gurgling drink, then pushed the girl from him. She sank to the mat with the slow movement of softened tallow falling over, and lay without moving.

"She changed a lot after Willerby died. Changed before. That gash on her face done her up. You fellows know about her, don't you? No woman ever come below the Line that could touch her f'r looks or fire. Naw! Look at her from her left side an' she's still got some looks too."

"And the fire—a little of that remains?" asked McGuire, touching the back of his own neck significantly.

"—— cat. Yeah! Un-hunh. Her an' Slade Willerby was al'us having it up and down, hot an' heavy—'fore the old man died. Afterwards it was worse. He tried to make her turn loose o' lots of jewels an' things old Willerby give her. Slade wanted 'em. ——, man, they're worth money. He said they was just loaned f'r her to wear.

" 'Give 'em up,' he said.

"Know what she said to him? Well I'll tell you. She said—

" 'There's only one thing I'll ever give to you, Slade Willerby, and that's the point of a knife!' "

"He knows she meant it, too. An' she did, by ——"

Mathers touched the back of his own neck:

"That's what she done to me! An' all I done was bring her a message from Slade."

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Gurgle-gurgle-gurgle, said the bottle. Mathers wiped his mouth on a forearm. He was warmed up to talking, and McGuire's attentive half-smile and steady eyes were encouraging. Mathers was too competent a scoundrel not to know what he was saying; that is, he was not giving away secrets; in fact was not telling more than was common gossip among the residents of Valkua, a small, rich Fijiian island which, more than any other of his holdings, Willerby had used as a home place.

"Y'see after the old man's death she wouldn't leave Valkua. Said it belonged to her. Slade wouldn't leave either. Said it belonged to him. They lived in the same house, by ——. Him at one end, her at the other. She had a lot o' Kingsmill Islanders. Know them Kingsmill fellows? They're the scrappiest niggers in the South Seas. Fine times we had around that place, I'll tell you! One Resident Commissioner drunk hisself to death trying to straighten out their mess. They had papers an' claims an' witnesses. I'm not up on law business. But Lania DuBeque never lets go o' anything she's got her fingers on—only she did let go, all in a hurry! I'll tell about that."

He raised the bottle, shook it, peered at it, then tossed it aside.

"Ever see her, either o' you fellows?"

He looked from McGuire to Delaney. McGuire said nothing, but Delaney replied:

"Oi always been onlucky wid womin. Oi never seen one yet Oi'd look at."

"You'd look at her. Yeah. Even now with that six-inch scar on her face. From the corner of her eye to the point of her chin, cut to the bone. That's one side. From the other side she looks like a queen or somethin.' Acts it too. An' she wore them jewels right under Slade Willerby's nose. Just to make him mad. It did. He's handsome, Slade is. An' he'd like to have had them jewels to help him look like a king I guess. He didn't get 'em. He tried to get somethin' better. That's why he's over in the Solomons. At least that's the way he headed."

Mathers grinned, showing his teeth.

"The girl, you mean?"

"Nobody knew she had this girl. Nobody ever heard o' her. One day a trader that come up from Sydney put her ashore at Valkua. His name was Miller. Old friends, me and Miller. He told me about it. On the way up he'd tried to be friendly, y'know. Thought maybe she was lonesome, bein' at sea that way, by herself. He didn't try two times. Not him, an' old Harry Miller ain't easy discouraged if the girl's good lookin.'

"I was down to the wharf when Miller's old bark *Ballagat* comes into the bay, so I hopped into a canoe an' had a couple o' boys take me out so I could say,'Hello!' and have a glass or two with an old friend before he come ashore.

"Before I'm up the ladder he's tellin' me about it. Miller he's about my age, but shows it more. He's only got one eye and a couple o' teeth are gone in front where somebody once hit him with something. He ain't what you call handsome, but if you handle a woman right that never makes much difference.

"I says:

" 'You let a girl put it over you, on your own ship, all the way from Sydney! What you suppose the Lord give a man fists for? Just to knock around other men?'

"I was teasin' him a bit, you know. But in the old days Harry'd tamed many a one. Some o' these black beach-girls do put on the stand-offingest airs. A woman's only a woman an' you've got to handle 'em right. Ain't that so?"

Mathers paused with a broad wink, then went on—

"Miller says:

" 'She's white. Didn't I tell you? She's white an'——'

" 'But you was at sea, on your own ship,' I says.

" 'She's got eyes queerer 'n her mother's.'

" 'Who's her mother?' I asks.

" 'Didn't I tell you? I must be still crazy. Lania DuBeque, an' you know how *she* can look at you.'

" 'Who?'

" 'DuBeque, I tell you. Lania DuBeque.'

" 'Sweet thunders o' Saint Judas!'

" 'That's what I say.'

" 'How'd you come to bring her?'

" 'She give me this,' said Harry, an' he shows me a diamond 'tween his finger an' thumb that's big as a gull's eye. 'I'm glad you come. She wants somebody to show her where her mother lives.'

"When she come on deck I 'most toppled over the side. Ever'body knows Lania DuBeque used to be the prettiest woman they ever saw; an' this girl was just like her, only with something more. She had eyes like a frigate-bird, an' I saw right off

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what old Harry meant by the way she now never looked at him. He bowed way down, and she didn't see him. He said I was a friend of her mother's an' would be the escort.

" 'I am Miss Stanlea,' she said. 'Stanleaaaa'—like that.

"Her voice made you think of a fiddle. I don't mean it was sweet like music, but it had that slow, clear sound. An' pretty! But not like any other woman I ever seen, an' I've seen a lot. An' she had old 'Blackbird' Miller so clear whipped on his own deck that he was bowin' and scrapin' humble-like as a kicked dog. Just to look at her made you think o' flowers an' birds an' jew'lry, with that fish-hawk look in her eyes which was just the same as a knife out at arm's length to keep you off.

"Well we was rowed ashore, an' there was Slade Willerby on the beach with the horse's reins across his arm. He'd rode down an' was standin' there wondering what the old *Ballagat* was doin' in.

"He looked at the girl, and he looked at me, and he looked at the girl and his eyes just stayed right there.

"He said—

" 'Is there anything I can do for you?'

"She said—

" 'I am Miss Stanlea, and I have come to see my mother who is Mrs. DuBeque and lives here.'

" 'I am Mr. Willerby, and your mother is a very dear friend of mine,' he says.

"He's handsome, Slade Willerby is. He loses his head quick over a woman, an' black or white, he stays right after her till she's his.

"But he'd never seen one like her. Her eyes—they was gray eyes and had fire in 'em that changed and sparkled like a diamond does. She looked at him cool as you please. An' he was in love with her quicker 'an a cat can sneeze. Like his father that way. One look an' *pouff!* He was crazy about this girl.

"Know what he done? I'll tell you. He got a couple o' horses hitched to a light buggy an' drove her clear around the island, pretendin' it was the way home when the house wasn't more than a mile from the beach. He wanted to get acquainted before old Madame DuBeque got hold of the girl. He did too——"

Mathers broke off and fixed his eyes intently in the distance.

McGuire turned his head and saw a native girl running playfully from two small boys that were like miniature fauns chasing a woodland girl.

"That's her," said Mathers.

"Who?"

"Old Buli's niece. I'd *marry* her in a minute. The old —— wants too much money."

"We'll give a hundred dollars for a passage. Gold."

Mathers started to shake his head, then with a quick look from McGuire to Delaney and a sudden slap on his own knee he cried:

"I'll do it. I'll do it if you boys will pay me now."

"Red," said McGuire to Delaney, "count out the money for the captain."

Delaney did not like to give up good hard money until his broad feet were on the *Jack and Jill's* deck. He eyed McGuire with puzzled steadiness.

"Count it out, Red. The captain is waiting. We'll settle everything now."

"That's right," said Mathers genially. He was eager and pleased, and stared at Delaney's belt.

Delaney unlaced one of the bulging pockets and carefully taking out five broad American gold-pieces stacked them on the mat before him and again glanced questioningly toward McGuire. McGuire nodded.

At that moment the sleeping girl opened her eyes and sat up; and when Mathers took the money she put out a hand and playfully tried to open his fingers. Pieces of gold were pretty and she knew what money was. "No matter what's the color o' their hides, they're all alike," said Mathers grinning. "When they hear the click o' the yeller metal they'll walk over a red-hot gridiron to get their arms 'round you!"

He playfully poked his thumb against the girl's ribs; and she squealed and jerked back, laughing.

"Now," said Mathers as he stood up, "you're stoppin' over on Lele, you say. I'm not leavin' for three or four days, three anyhow. You go bring your things. I may get into trouble by takin' you, but us white men have to stick together down in these blasted seas. That's what I say! You be back here tomorrow or the next day. No hurry, you know. I got some business to tend to now."

He slipped his feet into his shoes, picked

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up his revolver and started off. The drunken girl struggled up and began to follow.

"Go back, you! Git!"

She thought he was being merry, and lurched caressingly against him. He shoved her away. She fell, and began crying and yelling as if half-killed while he went on without looking back. The soggy natives looked on, dully grinning.

McGuire and Delaney watched her for a moment, then looked at each other.

"Ye're a bigger fool than ye look, McGuire. He manes to sail off widout us."

"Of course he does. That's why we are going on board right now."

"Then what did ye waste one hundred good Yankee dollars for?"

"Why don't you steal everything you want instead of paying for it? Besides, down here money is of no more use to us than clam-shells. It is easy to be honest when it costs nothing. Come along."

VI

THEY went to the beach and got a young native in a small canoe to paddle them to the *Jack and Jill* that tugged at her anchor out in the bay. As they approached they expected to see signs of life, but not a head was raised over the rail at them. The canoe came up to a sea-ladder that was dangling over the side and McGuire scrambled up, then, leaning down, took the shotgun from Delaney's extended hand. A moment later Delaney was by his side. They looked about cautiously.

The *Jack and Jill* was a small two-mast trading schooner of about a hundred tons, with a deck-house forward and a raised skylight aft, and the dirtiest, sloppiest deck—literally strewn with raffle—that they had ever seen.

"Oi wonder did these cannybals ate each other up," said Patrick Delaney.

"Shh-h. Let's not bother anybody. Maybe they're sleeping or drunk."

"But Oi want a pipe an' some real tobacco out ov the trade room."

"It will be locked."

"It will be unlocked too."

"Mathers said for us to be back tomorrow, or the next day. That means he intends to go out early in the morning or tonight. We'll stow ourselves away, Pat. The expression on his face when he sees us out at sea will be worth the money we've paid."

"The only place Oi 'll stow myself away will be in a bunk. Oi can do some real sleepin' wid half a chance."

They went below and into the cabin, which was dirty and littered, and hot and stuffy. They opened one after another of three small rooms off the cabin, but only in one was there evidence of anybody having used it.

"We can stay in one of these and keep quiet. He'll never know it until we are well to sea."

But Patrick wanted some real tobacco. He was tired of having smoked dried banana-leaves. He and McGuire prowled about cautiously, and found nothing in the way of a locked door.

"That fellow's no trader," said McGuire. "There's the only thing under a lock—except the lazaret."

He pointed toward a big chest that was lashed to the deck in the cabin.

"D'ye think he stole th' ship, McGuire? He looked scared when he had a look at us."

"It wasn't that. He knew *us*, by the second glance anyway, and thought we might be after his ship."

"Ye mane he knows who we are?"

"Do you think red whiskers are a disguise when the queen has proclaimed you wear 'em? Mr. Mathers would have liked well enough to have our hands in chains or our head on stakes, but he had no way of knowing that our shotgun is empty, rusty and broken. He's a black-hearted scoundrel, Pat, but not enough of one to want to be friends with us. He thinks we would cut his throat quick as we'd split a coconut."

"Oi never hurt a poor little coconut."

They prowled all about through the cuddy and pantry, picked up some tinned stuff and biscuits, pried into everything that was not locked, looked for the ship's papers and found nothing, then withdrew into the small, stuffy stateroom they had selected because it was unused and had a double-decked bunk. Sitting on the edge of the bunk, they made a feast of the tinned meats and biscuits, after which Delaney stretched himself out full length and slept.

McGuire, more restless, more curious, returned to the cabin and gingerly inspected everything that he saw; he went up the companionway and peered over the

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combing and caught sight of a bushy-headed black lazily smoking in the shade of the deck house. Presently he saw another native saunter into view, heard him grunt, and watched him take out a pipe and lean against the rail. The crew was evidently coming to life.

Since they had on board no trade goods to be stolen, and the Caroline natives thereabouts were as peaceable as deacons, besides being in dread of cannibals, there was no need for a close look-out; and Mathers was not the man who would insist on one for the sake of discipline.

Late in the afternoon McGuire, watching through a port, saw Mathers being rowed to the ship in great haste. By his gestures it was evident that he was hurrying the natives. He was accompanied by two who were not rowing, and as they approached McGuire saw that one of these was a shriveled, hairless old fellow with bright eyes. His neck was scrawny and thrust forward, very much like a turtle's neck when far out of its shell.

McGuire went into the stateroom and awakened Delaney, less because he wanted him up and listening than because he was afraid one of the Irishman's prodigious snores might disclose their presence.

Delaney sat up with a yawn, stretching his great arms and rolling the shoulders.

"A'ready toime for a fight," he said indifferently.

"Mathers is coming on board with some natives."

"Afther whisky, Oi bet. We'll see where he keeps it."

"Shhe-hh. Here they come now."

There was a tramping and scraping of feet as Mathers clattered down the ladder in his heavy shoes. He was in a good humor. They could hear his hoarse voice joking with cheerful oaths and occasionally the thin tones of the two natives who had come down to the cabin with him. It was at first difficult to make out what they were about, though evidently some sort of bargain was being made, for Mathers would clap something on the table then call high heaven to witness that he would not let himself be so badly cheated by offering anything more.

McGuire barely opened the door, which unlike the usual door into a stateroom, did not slide in a groove or open out, but swung inward.

He saw that the big chest was open, and many square bottles of gin were ranged on the table at which the two natives sat, the older one—Mathers called him Buli—was like a badly-carved wooden idol that had come to life.

Mathers threatened time and again to stop the bargaining, he swore at Buli and pretended to be angry; but the old fellow merely grinned.

"I won't give you rifles. I'm not goin' down to the Solomons without arms myself. There's money. You can buy your own rifles from the next whaler or trader."

He clanked the gold, piece by piece, on the table. Buli's bright old eyes watched each piece as if it was alive and might crawl off.

But he was a shrewd old fellow. He shook his head and grunted contemptuously at the seven or eight bottles of gin.

"Good gin," Mathers said, opening a bottle and pouring generously into a cup.

So they continued drinking and arguing. The three of them were soon tipsy, but Buli was a tough bargainer. He said:

"Whale shippee come back soon. Captain he say:

"'Buli, you keep her for me till I come. I give you rifles an' whisky. Ho, all you want, Buli!'"

The drunker Buli became the less important rifles appeared in his calculation, but his cunning avarice broke out in increased demand for liquor and tinned stuff.

"I've got a long trip. I can't give you all my stores. Here's money, you can buy your own stores."

Buli eyed the gold pieces, but shook his old head.

At last they came to agreement, and Mathers went on deck and immediately came back with two of his crew, who were naked with lime-colored hair.

Mathers opened the lazaret, and taking a lantern they went into it while he leaned over and told them what to take. Three cases of whisky were pushed up and stacked on the deck, then when he told his blacks to come out, Buli began insisting on something more and when Mathers cursed him merely sat back sullenly and repeatedly grunted.

"—— you, you know I want to get out o' here yet tonight. If I had two days more, you'd take one case o' gin." Then to his blacks: "You fellows, break out that stuff

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over there. No, that's flour. The other—it's preserves an' jellies. He'll like it. I don't."

Three or four cartons about the size of five-gallon oil cans were put on the deck, and Buli eyed them curiously.

"Jelly. Ah, fine!" Mathers smacked his lips.

"No. Ugh." Buli shook his head. "More whisky. One—two more. Cases. No yelly. Ugh!"

Mathers stood in an attitude of savage disgust, and for a moment he seemed really about to end the bargaining by kicking the old fellow out of the cabin; but angrily he gave way, and upon Buli's repeated assurance that he would be satisfied with two more cases, Mathers ordered his boys to get it out.

Thereupon in the cabin five cases of whisky and gin, two cases of tobacco, and one hundred dollars in gold passed from the possession of Mathers into the hands of Buli and his companion on condition that the girl A-Ina would be delivered to Mathers.

The exchange was arranged in something of the manner of primitive barter, for Buli wisely had as much distrust of Mathers as Mathers, with an equal amount of wisdom, had of Buli.

The stuff was carried up and placed in one of the *Jack and Jill* boats, in which Mathers with a boat crew of his own went ashore while Buli in his canoe hurried ahead. The liquor and tobacco was then piled on the beach, and Mathers sat on it, impatiently kicking his heels and watching the edge of a coconut grove into which Buli and some of the natives had disappeared while others squatted about, waiting.

After a time Buli reappeared with two men, each holding the arm of a young frightened girl whom they dragged along.

"Thou art a fool," old Buli cried, scolding her at every step. "I have found thee a white man like thy father was. He is rich and good and will love thee. There is not a girl in the village but would make much of him, and go to him with laughter. It was hard for me to persuade him that thy worthless body was worthy of his love. See with what generosity he has put gifts on the beach for me, who am thy uncle. From this judge the rich things he will bestow upon thee."

To Mathers he said:

"Take her, for she is thine. Now shy and full of play-modesty as maidens are when they love. Her pride was great among the youths of the village, but she goes willingly to the arms of a white man like thee!"

A-Ina was a young slender girl with loose, bushy hair and a grass-girdle. Her father, so Buli said, had been a white man; but she had known nothing of him, and had grown up as a native. When she was about six or seven a missionary and his wife for a time had looked after her, but they went away after a few months, leaving hardly more trace of their influence than A-Ina's quaint English. She had grown up shy and wild and playful, quickly learning to keep out of sight of the men who came in ships. Mathers however had seen her, and bought her.

It was late in the afternoon, and Mathers wanted to be out to sea before night. He would rather have had a pair of horned devils on board than McGuire and Delaney, and his reasons for the preference were excellent.

He stayed on deck while the crew were getting the anchor up and sail set; but he held A-Ina tightly by the wrist, for he was afraid that she would flash over the side and into the water and be half-way to shore before he could get a boat lowered and after her. He pulled her down on the skylight beside him and talked to her. She did not cry, but she shivered and would not talk, and looked fearfully from side to side at the ugly crew. When he put an arm around her she neither resisted nor yielded, but seemed unconscious of what he was doing as she stared at the Solomon Islanders, of whom all other natives have a horror, that were running and shouting about the deck.

"—— you," said Mathers, a little disappointed. "Haven't you any life?"

VII

THE *Jack and Jill* stood out to sea. The day died like a candle that is blown upon, flickers a little and goes out. The land lay behind vague and dark, and the sea broke along the schooner with thump and splash while myriad flecks of phosphorus burned and vanished as if starlight had been ground into bright dust and sprinkled on the water.

At the table in the cabin Mathers sat in

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a chair that was fastened in position by slots in the deck, and he leaned on the table as he peered half-drunkenly at A-Ina. One of his hands held the girl's slender arm, and the slow motion of the schooner as it rose and fell with gentle rolling across the swells caused his body to sway slightly, thus increasing the appearance of drunkenness.

"What's the matter with you?" he demanded, shaking her. "Why don't you fight or cry or somethin'? Here, take a drink o' this. Put some life in you!"

He lifted a tin cup unsteadily, spilling some of the liquor, and thrusting the strong whisky almost against her face.

Overhead a lantern swung its vague oil-light slowly to and fro, dimly lighting the small cabin.

He could feel her body trembling, but she sat upright, alert, uneasy, looking slowly all about her, moving her head with little nervous jerks while her eyes darted into corners, overhead, from object to object.

"Come out of it, you!"

He shook her again. She did not resist; she did not turn her face from the dirty tin cup, but it was as if she did not see it.

With a shove he let go of her arm and drank the whisky himself, then threw the thimbleful or so that was left into her face. He laughed at the way it startled her. She jumped up and vacantly rubbed her face with the back of her hand, while her eyes, now filled with a new terror as if no longer half-dazed, darted with a kind of intelligent fear from place to place.

Mathers got slowly out of the chair, watching her intently and grinning.

"No, oh no, you can't get away. You 'd jus' like to jump ove'board, wouldn't you?"

He made a lurching grab at her, but she leaped aside with the quickness and silence of a shy little animal, and stared at him from the other side of the table.

"Oh I'll catch you!" he shouted with a sort of playfulness and made false starts as if he were about to run first one way, then the other, around the table; then he threw himself across it, snatching at her.

She jumped back easily, and stood quivering.

In getting off the table he slipped and fell, and as he was getting up he saw her disappear into a stateroom. He had not seen the door apparently open of itself, as if offering her a sanctuary.

Mathers laughed. None of the stateroom doors had locks. She had trapped herself. In that small room she would have no space to dodge. He turned the handle of the door and lurched against it with all of his weight. To his drunken amazement the door opened about six inches, then slammed shut again with a force that threw him almost off his feet.

He stared at it with blinking wonder. His weight was nearly three times that of the girl's.

"I'll fix you," he muttered.

He tried the handle of the door again, and it did not resist; then he leaned against it, but it would not give. He thought she must have braced it in some way. He swore and pounded with his fists, beating the skin from his knuckles, being suddenly angered. Then he lurched again, bucking it with all of his weight; but the door gave way, simply opened back, and he fell through.

"Well," said McGuire, who sat on the top bunk with his legs over, "I'm glad you've come in. We want to have a talk with you."

McGuire was not smiling and his voice had no humor in it, not even a mocking pleasantry.

Red Delaney stood to one side of the door. The girl was behind it, and out of sight, trembling like a wild little animal that has at last found cover.

Mathers came slowly to his hands and knees. His mouth hung open as if on a broken jaw; but if the jar and shock and surprize had somewhat sobered him, every joint in his body was loosened by fear.

"Drag him out in the cabin, Red. Put him in a chair. We'll have a talk."

Mathers sank back, a hand slowly moving toward his holster.

"Take yer hand off that. Oi'll kick yer face in," said Delaney.

Mathers' hand dropped away.

"I—I didn't—it's all right fellows. I'll let the girl alone. Don't you see, I've been drinkin' and I didn't know what I was doin'. How'd you, you get here?"

"Get up," said McGuire.

Mathers got up unsteadily and leaned against the doorway.

McGuire slipped off the bunk, and taking the revolver from Mathers' holster thrust it into the waist-band of his own trousers; then with a gesture toward a chair, said—

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"Go over there and sit down."

There was a certain loathing in McGuire's way of looking at him that made the skin creep on Mathers' body; and when Mathers looked at Delaney he knew that his life was not worth the tail of a dead fish.

He went weakly to a chair and sat in it as if there were not a bone in him that was not softened. McGuire sat on the edge of the table, and Delaney stood behind him with hands to hips and feet apart.

"Her uncle wanted to get rid of the girl. He'd sold her to somebody. You know down here girls are took that way an' I——"

He reached for a bottle of whisky and filled the cup, then, with a sudden thought, offered the cup to McGuire, who took it and indifferently threw cup and all aside.

"So you are a W. W. trader, are you?" asked McGuire, with the glitter that was seldom seen coming into his eyes.

"Why yes you see I—I worked for old Willerby an'——"

"Was it Slade Willerby you have been working for the last two or three years?"

Mathers felt the impact of menace behind this oblique questioning, and he fumbled for vague answers; but McGuire struck the table sharply with the flat of his palm.

"Yes, I've worked for him. Yes, why, what's the matter? What's wrong? Don't you fellows like him?"

McGuire drew the revolver from his waist-band and pointed it at Mathers' head:

"Now you just try to get around any more questions that I ask and you'll wake up in ——. I want to know, right now, who paid you to make that attack on the *Good Shepherd!*"

Mathers gave a cry and sank back with hands out.

McGuire straightened his arm and glanced along the barrel.

"Willerby! Willerby!" Mathers gasped, bending as far back in the chair as he could. "Don't shoot! It was Willerby, Slade Willerby!"

"Did you use this schooner?"

"Yes."

"Who was with you? Who were the other men?"

"Terry Rand—he was one."

"Who is he?"

"He's a young fellow that's wanted down in Sydney. He killed an officer there."

"And the other man?"

"Bob Fellowe."

"I know him. He was Hurricane Williams, eh?"

"Yes. Yes, he was the lead——"

"Where is he now?"

"I don't—oh yes, yes. He's on Willerby's plantation—the new one down in the Solomons."

"Where, in the Solomons?"

"Willerby Island."

"That is where you were going?"

"Yes."

"On the *Good Shepherd* you took the part of Red Delaney!"

"Ow, don't shoot! I—I had to do it I——"

Mathers sank back putting his own hands to his throat, as if protecting it, for Delaney had stepped forward with his fingers set like hooks, seemingly about to tear the fellow to pieces.

"Get away, Red."

"Dan McGuire, ye're afther forgettin' all them months we've been hunted for murtherin' good men an' a woman, an' a livin' off shark's gut an' bein' nearly drown while this black-hearted baste drink his whisky an' ate jams that he stole off the mission ship; an' if Oi don't kill him wid these two hands of mine may the Lord turn his deaf ear to me mother's prayers!"

Mathers had fallen forward and leaning on his arms was peering stupidly toward the cartons which bore the *Good Shepherd's* name and the missionary station for which they had been intended as a delicacy.

"Uh, I didn't want to take 'em," he said dully, lifting his eyes toward McGuire. "But Fellowe, he liked jam and Terry Rand would have too. They ought to be in my place here. It was them that done it."

He gestured weakly.

"That Terry Rand, where is he now?"

"With Willerby. He's close to Willerby—his pal. They're both down in the Solomons."

"At Willerby Island?"

"I dunno. They went down there after a woman. Curse all women!" he cried suddenly. "I wouldn't have took that money off you if it hadn't been f'r one of 'em. I'd have come right back to the ship an' kept you fellows off it. You didn't fool me a bit. I knowed you both, the first thing."

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"Very intelligent of you," said McGuire. "But what of this other woman?"

"Madame DuBeque an' her bunch of wild natives stole Blackbird Miller's ship an' him on it. He got word off the ship at an island where they stopped for water that she was makin' him head for Willerby Island, and the message it come on to Slade Willerby. Him an' Terry Rand went right off."

"Why Willerby Island?"

"Her and Fellowe ha' been back to back for years. He was old W. W.'s big man. Slade would listen to him, and he always liked Madame DuBeque, so I guess she went to Fellowe to keep Slade from gettin' her girl. She don't care about anything there is, except that girl."

Mathers was talking readily, willingly.

"Now tell me this, Mathers. Why did Willerby do it—the *Good Shepherd?*"

"Now I'll tell you. The missionaries always fought th' Willerbys, an' Bishop Johnston he's led 'em. He was workin' hard to get British officials put on the Solomons an' get 'em annexed or something —like Fiji an' New Zealand. Now the Solomons is about all the rich pickin's that's left, where a fellow can do as he pleases; an' Slade 's goin' after them hard. Old W. W. told him to. Fellowe had an old grudge 'gainst Johnston and Williams too.

"Slade said—

" 'We'll just put an end to this —— old church meddler, an' make it hot for that blasted Williams too.'

"But it was Terry Rand that showed him how to do it. I didn't do anything. Hones'. I just went along. I had to. Now I'm just takin' this schooner down to Fellowe. They need it down there for catchin' blacks to work the plantation."

"Queer name for a schooner—*Jack and Jill.* Who thought of that?"

"Terry Rand. It was him that played you, McGuire."

"After I have met the gentleman he may not care as much for the part."

McGuire spoke mildly, with a return of something more like his natural manner.

McGuire was now pretty well satisfied with his luck, and had good cause to be. The whole black mystery of the *Good Shepherd* was cleared; he had a ship under his feet instead of canoe, arms in his hands, food in the lazaret, and knew where to find his friends—and enemies.

VIII

McGUIRE and Delaney sat together at the table under the swinging lantern and disputed as to what should be done. A-Ina, still timid and silent, sat in the shadows and kept her eyes on Delaney, regarding him with a kind of shy wonder.

"An' Oi say," declared Delaney, striking the table with a hard fist, "Oi 'd sooner have a snake in me bosom than that baste on this ship. Give him two knives, an' Oi'll tie one hand behind me. Thot 'll be fair."

They had put Mathers into his stateroom with a bottle of whisky and lashed the door fast, making him securely a prisoner.

"You're a bloodthirsty brute," said McGuire undisturbed, for he knew Delaney better than Delaney knew himself.

"Oi 'm not. But he's a low down dirthy murtherer an' called hisself Pat Delaney! Oi tell yez, McGuire, Oi 'll kill him wid me two hands for jus' what he would 'ave done to thot little A-Ina. An' are we goin' to turn back an' put her ashore, like Oi said?"

"We are not. She can't be worse off with us than with her uncle."

"The divil hisself carved him out ov a dried shark's gut!"

"She wouldn't want to go. Look at her now."

Delaney turned slowly toward her. A-Ina continued to look at him with an innocent wonder. A shy smile trembled across her face. She was unhappy, but no longer afraid.

"Don't yez be scared ov us," said Delaney.

A-Ina shook her head. Her voice was soft and serious—

"You good men."

"You wid yer ideas ov mercy—Dan McGuire, thot's not like ye. 'T is the law ov the damned thot holds in these seas, an' Oi 'm one, you're another, an' he's a third. Put a blindfold on me, an' give him a knife, an' wid me two bare hands Oi'll kill him, man to man."

"No, we had better keep him a while."

"What's the good ov thot? We can't give him to anybody widout bein' caught ourselves; an' he would lie out ov what he's told us, an' we would bay hung like smoked hams on a hook. If we kape him wid us, he'll get away an' make throuble."

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"There are gunboats down here. If one overhauled us, we'd have a fine story to tell, wouldn't we? without Mathers. 'Honest, Mr. Captain, we had the man that knew all about the fellows that took our names to attack the *Good Shepherd*—but we threw him overboard!' How would you like to look into a naval officer's face and say that?"

"Oi'd let yez say it. Jus' as Oi'm goin' let ye go up an' do th' talkin' to them cannybals."

"Any crew that Mathers has handled will be easy to manage."

McGuire, who could make himself understood in a dozen island dialects, as any one can who knows three or four of the more important ones as well as he knew them, had the head men of the crew come aft.

They were surprized, but not greatly astonished to see two white men whom they had never seen before in charge of the ship. They had been on plantations and inter-island schooners, and were used to the incomprehensible ways of the whites.

McGuire said to them that Mathers was drunk, but that in the morning he would come on deck himself and tell them that these two men were now his mates and in charge of the ship when he was not giving orders.

The natives grunted a few times, regarded Delaney with steady doubtful eyes, and went off.

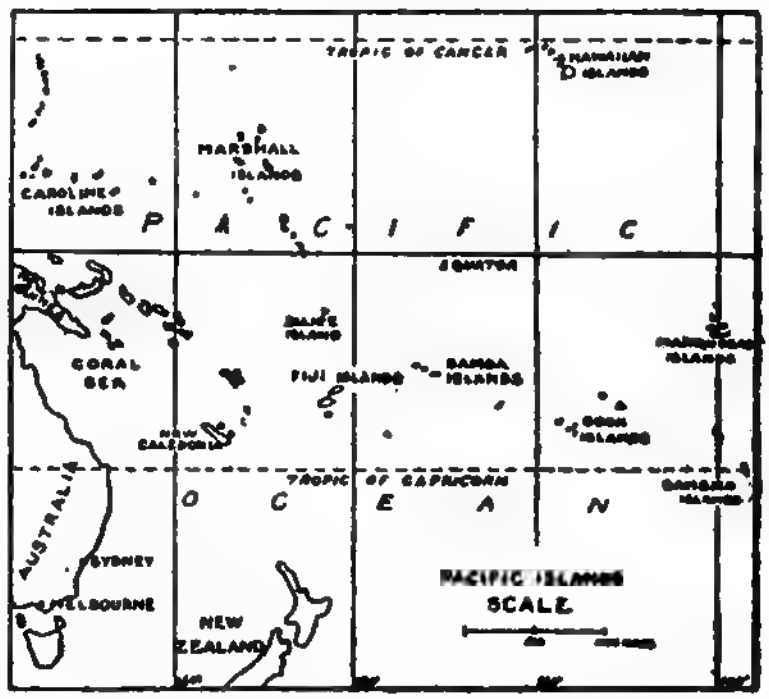
The next morning Mathers came on deck, and being assured that if he tried any monkey-business he would have his head knocked off, he told them that these two men were his officers and in charge of the ship when he was not on deck.

As this was the last time that he was to appear on deck for many days the command of the ship passed smoothly over to Delaney; for though McGuire was the better navigator, and as good a seaman, the natives looked with great respect at the big Irishman and were a little awed by his fluency of speech and brogue.

IX

NEW GEORGIA is perhaps the richest of the Solomons, and was long known as the burial ground of traders; the climate is severe on white men; the natives are murderous.

A few miles east of Rubiana Island, formerly one of the most savage spots of New Georgia, are five or six small islands, all of which have very little beach as they face the ocean with coral cliffs that in some places are three hundred feet high. The smallest, highest and most inaccessible of these islands is known to the natives round about as Kakarutu, which is to say, Finger.



Natives at one time from a far distance had pointed it out to Hurricane Williams as the dwelling place of devils; an island that was never visited except by the dead.

Williams had gone to Kakarutu, taking McGuire and six strong rowers who pulled the half-mile or so from where his schooner lay aback. Five of these rowers were black; the other was Red Delaney, who was as big as two and strong as three of the natives.

Williams held the steering-oar and they shot through a narrow bottle-neck of an opening with the incoming tide in much the same way that a chip is tossed by a breaker. They were thrown through; and the water growled like a multitude of hungry devils and beat with blows like thunder on the cliffs.

They came into a tiny calm lagoon, walled by rocks that at first appeared too steep to be climbed; but after a trial or two they found a winding ascent that was not difficult.

If there were any devils they were frightened into hiding by the party.

Kakarutu seemed to be nothing but a square mile of jungle that had been thrust

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into air when earth was younger and suffering from volcanic fevers. As nearly as they could tell no one had ever been on the island before.

A ship might come in with the tide, but only the craftiest of boatmen could get out. No sailing ship could ever get out.

Williams, who was always on the lookout for good hiding-places, saw that this bay was useless for his purpose; and leaving the island in their boat was far more dangerous, though less spectacular, than coming through the narrow entrance. A rip beat against the outward suction of the tide, and the native rowers all swore that devils grappled with their oars.

The best of these native rowers was Marugi, the son of the chief who ruled the village of Bakari, some twenty miles from this island of the Finger, and many other villages too, with a club of iron wood. Marugi was as ugly as his name, at least from the neck up. Williams had taken him and some of his fellow villagers from an island plantation where, after having been kidnaped by blackbirders, they were sold as laborers; and he brought them home.

From that time on the dark plague spot of Bakari village, which even heavily-armed blackbirders had learned to avoid, became a sort of sanctuary for Williams; and Marugi the Ugly called Red Delaney "brother."

"He recognizes a family resemblance," McGuire told Delaney.

It was for the village of Bakari that sat far back in a lagoon, miles deep, that McGuire and Delaney had been heading; for there they would be as welcome as prodigals returning home, and sooner or later Williams himself would arrive in the village if he was not already there.

X

"WELL, it won't be long now," said McGuire as he raised a hand and pointed ahead to the misty land.

Delaney sat on the skylight smoking a pipe which had not been out of his mouth more than a few minutes at a time since Mathers lost command of the ship. The little A-Ina was by him. She hardly left his side and was quite frankly his slave, though at times she would shyly tease him.

"It's queer," said McGuire, "that she should be so afraid of the crew—when your face doesn't scare her."

"Ye av a jalous nathure," Delaney answered complacently.

For some reason, to be explained only in the shadowed depth of her woman's heart, A-Ina was fascinated by the big man and loved him much as a child loves some one who has been good to her; more intently perhaps than a child, but as simply. Delaney thought of her merely as a pretty child, and petted her; but she was a woman and loved him.

"Which shows that there is no knowing anything about a woman, even a young one," McGuire had said to himself. "Red Delaney is the ugliest white man I ever saw—and she is the prettiest half-caste."

As the *Jack and Jill* drew nearer to land Mathers peered through the open port of his room and desperately wondered where they were, and what was going to be done with him.

Mathers had become more nearly sober than at any time in years, and had been given less to eat.

"It's toime ye remember yer sins an' forgot yer stomick," Delaney would say when he had begged through the door for a drink.

Mathers grew nervous and shaky, flesh seemed melting away under his skin and this gave his body a sort of wilted appearance; but as his head became more clear he desperately realized the position that he was in; and in his fear of what might happen to him he actually had more dread of Slade Willerby, Fellowe and Terry Rand learning that he had made a confession than of being haled into court.

Mathers had time for reflection, and as he could not sleep, most of the day and night were given over to thinking about his troubles. An idea that flashed into his mind and stayed there was what an excellent thing it would be if he could deliver McGuire and Delaney, bound hand and foot, on the beach of Willerby Island. The soberer he became the more anxious he grew; and Mathers sober was not the same sort of fellow as Mathers as full of whisky as a newly fished sponge of salt water.

There were rifles in the big chest, there were knives in the galley, and a crew of seven blacks that could be counted on to kill McGuire and Delaney.

Mathers stamped about in his room, lay

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down on his bunk and turned from side to side, sat with his head between his hands and pulled at his hair, tried the door twenty times a day, and every time the door was opened to admit his plate of food watched for half a chance to catch Delaney, who brought it, off his guard.

Either McGuire or Delaney was always on deck. They stood four-hour watches, and aroused each other at night by pounding on the deck above the bunk where each turned in. They were old hands at dangerous work and light sleepers, even going so far as not to touch the excellent whisky of the *Jack and Jill*—whisky being about the most important part of the stores that the schooner was taking to Fellowe—except with moderation and then only through the day.

As each relieved the other, day or night, he fastened the revolver to his belt, and if a squall came up so that the crew was running about the deck, the one that was on watch roused the other; and if any one of the crew had tried to pass behind the man on watch he would have been shot. There were two loaded rifles and a box of shells by the bunk where they slept, and they had showed A-Ina how to brace shut, with a slat from a bunk, the door of the room that she used.

But these precautions and the sense of danger in which they lived did not make them at all uneasy; they took it as a matter of course, as doctors move about in the midst of a plague, or soldiers in a skirmish. They were alert and cautious, not frightened. They knew that any of the crew might pass behind either of them a hundred times, and go dutifully about his work; but at the hundred and first chance it might be a blow in the back of the head.

Late in the afternoon, getting their bearings pretty well by having Kakarutu well off the port bow, they decided to lie-to until morning because before they could get off the village they would have to pass numbers of little islands and dodge about among reef-guarded channels; and if they stood in too close to the shore they might be visited by some canoes well loaded with savages who, all along this part of the coast, were on the alert to cut out ships.

British gunboats had not yet, as they were to do a few years later, taught the New Georgia Islanders that boarding ships for white men's heads would bring down upon them the "smoke-ships" that spoke with voices of thunder.

XI

ABOUT six o'clock Delaney unlashed the door of Mathers' room and handed him a plate of cold salmon, biscuits and cold coffee.

Mathers took it in silence, but there was a gleam in his eyes that Delaney noticed. He said nothing, but when he drew the rope fast to the stanchion he gave an extra tug to tighten it.

That night Delaney had the first watch, from eight to twelve. The helm was lashed. The *Jack and Jill* rolled easily. The sky was cloudless and bright with stars. The blacks squatted together in the bows, talking. He walked back and forth with arms folded behind him and pipe in his mouth. He was barefooted. Occasionally he stopped before the companionway and peered down at the clock fastened under a lantern near the foot of the ladder. It was a quiet peaceful night, but he sensed vaguely that something was wrong, and which ever way he walked back and forth across the deck he kept his face forward.

He thought at first that the atmosphere of strangeness must be because the schooner was not pounding ahead; then he realized that the crew was not laughing at all, that their voices never rose above a broken rumble. This did not trouble him. He knew that blacks practically never attacked unless they could strike the first blow from behind. Even when they came off in canoes and meant to cut out a ship they usually tried to get on board peaceably, then begin the fight by hitting somebody in the back.

He heard a soft patter of light feet behind him and wheeled, one hand at the knife's hilt, the other on the revolver.

A-Ina laughed softly, and said—

"You think I somebody-ee?"

She gently touched his arm, then stepped back, smiling, half-shy, partly playing. The grass of her skirt rustled like a whispering. She was slender as a young palm, quick and graceful in her movements.

"Ye ought to be aslape, wid purty dreams all about you."

"E-ah, I sleep day-time, when it is hot."

She spun around and with a bounding leap alighted softly on the skylight grating,

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and stood as if daring him to catch her.

" 'T is a shame ye are a haythen. Yis, but 't would be more ov a shame if ye'd been raised a Christian wid long skirts an' corsets."

"Cor-sets?" she repeated with the doubtfulness of a new word.

She gave a jump and came to the deck as if floating, then again touched his arm gently, and darted back.

"Ye tryin' to start a game ov tag?"

"Taag?" she repeated with alert questioning.

"What ye know ov yer father, A-Ina. Av'n't yez iver been told somethin' about him?"

She shook her head. The loose hair fell across her shoulders.

"He was a white man. And went away," she said. "I do not know my mother. There was a great sickness. She went away too. The mish'ary man and woman that did love me wanted that I go to their island way off and live so that I would be good."

She tossed her hair with the force of shaking her head to show that he had not wanted to go with them.

"The dress I wear made me itch and hot. On their island all people—the bad too—wear clothes. They *swim* in clothes!"

A moment later she made a run as if to jump at him, then darted aside with a faint, soft, teasing laugh, looking back across her shoulder.

But Delaney's eyes followed her only for a second, then turned forward. Almost instantly he became aware of a shadow by the mainmast where a shadow had no right to be: two shadows, three, more, upright shadows, thick as darkness.

"Hi, yez fellows! What ye doin' there? Spake quick!"

A-Ina gave a little cry of fright, startled at finding the ugly crew were near.

There was a slight noiseless movement among the shadows, then one stepped out. The speech mostly used between natives and white men was probably the rudest form of linguistic effort in existence, being hardly more than the combination of a dozen words, of which "plenty," "catch," "by-and-by," "along," "stop," "*kai-kai*" (to eat), "gammon" (to talk), and "fellow" were the backbone.

It is amazing how much can be conveyed with such meager expressions. But most traders, and beach-combers too, soon learn native words; the natives soon pick up a glimmering of English, so the jargon is broadened into a bastard dialect.

"Me gammon you fellow about the place we stop along by-an'-by. No good place for black fellow. *Kai-kai* black fellow."

The complaint was that the crew, though belonging to the island of New Georgia came from the northwest, across from Willerby Island; and they had recognized the part of the coast they were now on, and from the schooner's lying-to were afraid that she meant in the morning to put into the dreaded lagoon, from which raiders in their great war conoes often swooped down on villages hundreds of miles off; and the crew very properly was afraid to venture into the neighborhood of their inveterate enemies on a ship that was poorly armed.

"Get for'ar-rd an' stay there," said Delaney. "Night be not the toime f'r gammon. Up wid yez, quick!"

The shadows noiselessly withdrew along the deck.

"I afraid," said A-Ina, stealing to him and taking hold of his arm.

"What ov?" demanded Delaney contemptuously. "Ov them?" He patted her hand. "Oi'll tell yez somethin', A-Ina. Ye'd betther save up your fears f'r white men, like meself. Le's see what toime it be?"

She walked with him, holding on tightly.

Delaney looked down the companion.

"If thot McGuire ain't shtole twenty minutes ov my slape! Well Oi'll scare it out ov him right now."

Delaney walked to port and beat rapidly on the deck with the revolver. Almost at once McGuire, who slept "all standing," that is, in his clothes, was on deck. He had glanced at the clock as he came by. He now glanced from A-Ina to Delaney and grinned.

"Nothin' ov th' kind," said Delaney quickly. "We av been afther quelling a mutiny. Them beggars for'ar-rd don't want to go over to Rubiana an' be *kai-kaied*."

"I hadn't thought of that," said McGuire. "And now that I have thought of it, I don't greatly care. Any way I have an idea some of these fellows were with Mathers in the *Good Shepherd* attack. We'll have to ask him about that."

"A word from us will save their ogly

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heads. Oi'll spake the word to Marugi."

McGuire knew too much about native ways to believe the "word" that Delaney would speak would do much good; however he said nothing of that. But he did say:

"There's something else I have thought of, though. A-Ina, this night air will give you a chill. That's a good girl. You go below. Wait a minute, Pat."

"Now what's the matther? Oi av stood half yer watch, Yez want me to keep ye company the other half?"

"Well I wasted half my sleep-time thinking of you." McGuire looked down the companion to make sure that A-Ina was not listening. "Pat, did you ever see a prettier girl?"

"Niver."

"You know over in Bakari village and thereabouts are a lot of chiefs, and they like plenty of wives."

"Yis. Their womin are so ogly they av to av a lot at one toime."

"We have to take A-Ina with us, and we can't keep her hid."

"But we c'n tell 'em, 'Hands off.'"

"Off of an unmarried girl that isn't a daughter to either of us? And trouble over a woman, Pat, is the last thing that we want. Even in white countries your best and closest friends will cut your throat over a woman; and we won't be in Bakari two days before three or four fellows we can't afford to offend will be wanting A-Ina for a wife. And they won't understand at all why we won't feel honored and be glad yo turn the girl over to one of them. Any kind of a refusal will mean unpleasant feelings. Natives are that way, particularly in this part of the world. There's only one white man that could say, 'Hands off,' and end the matter. That's Williams—and only because he *is* Williams."

"We'll say thot she is Williams' girl."

"Yes. And make Williams lose prestige. One of the things that sets Williams apart from other men—and natives are as watchful and as impressed by that as other people—is that Williams never looks at a woman. He has none of the weaknesses of a white man. They know in every way that he is different. You and I could have two or three wives and it wouldn't affect our standing much one way or the other."

"Why didn't yez think ov thot when Oi wanted to turn back an' put her ashore?"

"I have thought of something else. We'll just say that A-Ina is your wife."

"Oh yez will, will yez? Not by a —— sight."

"Why not? She'll agree, I know."

"Why don't yez do it yeself?"

"All right. I'll tell you what we'll do. We will explain the situation to her, and let her choose. How's that?"

"No —— good. Oi'm always onlucky wid womin. An' Oi don't want a woife."

"She won't be. We'll just pretend that she is. And if they think that she is married that will make all the difference in the world."

"Look here, Dan McGuire. Yez know what Oi think ov men thot take up wid girls down here. Them as marries an' makes a home an' traits their womin loike human bein's is all right in their way, but Oi'm not one ov thot kind. An' Williams, he'ud say—

" 'Delaney, Oi am done wid you!' "

"Not if he knew the facts. You have to do it, Pat. You have to do it for her. For ourselves too, because you wouldn't let her be taken as a wife by one of those fellows. It would be worse than Mathers. If we didn't let her go, there'd be a row. They wouldn't understand."

"Now ye 'ave knocked all the slape out ov me. Why didn't yez wait till mornin'? Oi don't want a woife; an' —— it, least ov all Oi don't want a woife thot ain't a woife. Ye can think up more throuble f'r a man, Dan McGuire, than ould Satan hisself."

Delaney filled his pipe full of nigger-head and went below, puffing and grumbling. He knew that McGuire was pretty nearly right about it; and his own feeling toward A-Ina was that a white man himself would have to be a decent sort of a fellow before he could marry her without getting a big red fist in face. He loved the child, but as a child.

XII

IN THE mean time Mathers, seeing that the schooner had no way on her, had listened at the door, and at the port, wondering what could be going on. He half-hoped for a mutiny, but was afraid of one unless he himself had started it. He knew that Delaney and McGuire had nailed up the entrance from the hold into the cabin so that no one could come into it except through the companion, and that there

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had been no blacks aft since they took charge of the ship. His crew had no way of telling that he was a prisoner, and not drunk.

Mathers heard the thumping that had called McGuire on deck. Through his window he had heard the sound of their voices and knew that they were not uneasy though he could not understand what was said. He then heard Delaney walk down the ladder and fumbling about in the cabin. After that all was quiet, though now and then he could hear McGuire's soft footfall as he walked across the deck.

Mathers peered through his port and eyed the water uneasily. These seas were full of sharks. It was only a short drop to the water, but if he made a splash McGuire would certainly peer over the side.

Mathers fastened a corner of his blanket to his bunk, then waited until he believed that McGuire was on the other side of the deck. He threw the blanket through the port and let himself down noiselessly; and keeping close to the side swam along the schooner until he was under the bow sprit, then climbed up and came in over the bows.

The natives had their mats on deck, and some were still talking; and the first two that saw Mathers gave a cry.

"Curse you, be still. It's me—Mathers!" he said in a low voice.

McGuire called out sharply to know what was going on up forward.

Mathers told one of them what to say, and the fellow shouted:

"Debil catch 'em black fellow while 'im sleep. Him make big yell."

McGuire was a little doubtful. It had sounded like two voices in cry of fright; but the explanation of a bad dream was so pat that he could hardly question it without letting the blacks think he was too easily alarmed. The white man that lets Solomon islanders see that he is "jumpy" would do well to blow off his own head and have it over with, for sooner or later they will take that head themselves. Besides, what could it have been but a dream that would bring such a cry of fright without alarming all the other natives?

Mathers sneaked into the deck-house, followed by the blacks that were awake, where their voices would be less easily heard. One fellow was put on watch outside to see that McGuire did not come forward.

Mathers told the crew that these fellows he had taken on to help him with the ship were trying to steal it; and when he discovered that some of the crew had recognized that they were off the Lagoon, Mathers declared that he now understood the conversation that he had managed to overhear in the cabin.

The blacks became agitated as he explained that McGuire and Delaney meant to run the ship into the Lagoon and get a welcome by giving over the crew and himself to be *kai-kaied*. It was all very plain.

"You fellows help me," said Mathers. "We capture the ship, go around to Willerby Island. Fine! You fellows have everything you want then. No catch this ship—we all be *kai-kaied*."

This was acknowledged by rapid grunts and clucking.

"I don't dare show myself," said Mathers, "till the fight starts. If he saw me he would know something was up, right off. You two fellows, you go and say you come to gammon him. Get close, an' grab him. Then another one will run in with a hatchet and whack his head. If he sees the hands of you two fellows are empty he won't be on the watch. Then me an' another one will run to the companion an' finish off Delaney as he comes up. Get out your hatchets."

Every one of them had tomahawks as part of his personal property. Mathers was given one and tried its weight.

"Give me a knife too," he said.

One of the blacks gave him a long butcher knife. Mathers tried the edge with his thumb, then swore. The blade had cut through to the blood.

Two of the blacks went out on deck and were followed by another who kept behind, and far enough back so that it could not be noticed that he carried a hatchet under his arm.

"Now what's up?" said McGuire as the two blacks came as far as the mainmast.

"Me fellow gammon you," one of them said as they came on.

"All right, talk."

They pretended not to know what he meant, and came closer. McGuire saw a third fellow some fifteen behind and trying to keep in line with the mast.

"Stop!"

They came on as if they had not heard, which was itself a confession of their

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intention, for had they not been up to trouble they would have stopped.

McGuire did not hesitate. He shot, killing one; and the other jumped back with a yell.

At once the deck seemed full of yelling natives, as they bounded about. Belaying-pins hurtled at him. Mathers cried out and rushed into sight, but dodged behind a mast as McGuire shot. A native with uplifted hatchet streaked at him, and McGuire jumped back, shooting twice before the black fell as if tripped and slid almost to his feet.

He shot right and left. They had rushed aft, trying to surround him, come at him from the side and back. Another one dropped, then the revolver clicked on an empty shell. He drove the gun's muzzle into the face of the nearest, then jumped away, snatching at a dead man's hatchet. He had killed three, but four natives were left—and Mathers.

Two of the natives were at McGuire now, brandishing their tomahawks, jumping around, yelling, flourishing their weapons to disconcert him so that one could rush in and give the death blow, for McGuire held a hatchet, and backed to the rail, stood watchful, on guard, fending off their gestures. He knew that the first hard blow he struck at either of them would give the other the chance to strike him down, and he feinted from side to side with a wary calmness.

As Delaney, aroused by the shots and yells, had come on deck with a rifle in each hand, Mathers from beside the companion made a swipe at him with a hatchet; but with an overhand swing the big Irishman, who loved a fight as some men love the arms of a woman, brought a gun's butt alongside of his head; then almost at the same time holding the other rifle as if it was a revolver he fired pointblank at the nearest black.

The second native who had come to the companion with Mathers, seeing two men go down in the twinkling of an eye, without striking a blow, turned and went leaping along the deck forward, running away.

Delaney let him go; but, dropping one of the rifles, he jumped to starboard where McGuire was backed to the rail and the two blacks, now bouncing before and at either side of him, and were too eager to get in their final blow to be fully aware of what had happened elsewhere, were just about to close in.

McGuire was too nearly in line of fire for Delaney to shoot without shifting to another angle of the deck; so he brought the rifle barrel down on a black's head, knocking his skull in like a ripe melon. As the other then whirled with a yell and threw his hatchet, Delaney shot. But the blow had twisted the rifle barrel, and the bullet jammed with a shock that almost pulled the gun from his hands. The black broke forward, bounding along the shadowed deck, and vanishing.

"Are yez hurt?" Delaney cried, grasping McGuire's arm and peering down at him.

"No. How many are left?"

"Oi don't know. But Mathers is among them thot's dead."

Which was not true, for Mathers came to a half-hour later. The whole side of his head was swollen, and all of his face was blacked, purplish with bruises.

"Ye be tougher than Oi thought," said Delaney. "Go up for'ar-rd wid the other cannybals an' bring 'em back here to clane up the deck."

McGuire, as soon as he had pulled loose from Delaney's grip, began to count the dead so that he might know how many were left to settle with; and when he had finished he saw A-Ina behind the wheel. Her dark pretty eyes were unnaturally bright.

"You—why did *you* come on deck?"

"I throw myself there if you and him are killed!" she cried, and pointed over the side where the waves gently beat themselves into twinkling foam against the schooner.

XII

PRACTICALLY all of the next day was spent in making a cautious passage through the uncharted, winding channels and among the islands on the way to Bakari village which, though not a large village, was full of warlike headhunters; and placed near a beach but hidden among and overshadowed by a deep jungle.

The two blacks, Mathers and Delaney worked the schooner, while McGuire remained at the wheel. Two loaded rifles were fastened to the taffrail behind him; but he knew very well that unless he and Delaney lay down and went to sleep, or did something almost as incautious, there would be no further danger from what was left of the crew.

About the middle of the afternoon A-Ina,

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who sat on the skylight, cried out and pointed behind the schooner.

McGuire looked over his shoulder and saw a great high-stemmed war canoe, like an enormous water-dragon, not half a mile behind and coming for them at a speed that caused the water to fly away from the bow. The broad short oars of the rowers glistened as they struck, dipped and rose with one movement. At least forty men were in the canoe.

Almost at the same time there was a cry forward on the *Jack and Jill* and McGuire looking ahead saw another canoe just gliding from behind a small jungle-tufted island, not two hundred yards before them and directly in their path.

The natives had seen the ship, and maneuvered to approach from two directions.

TO BE CONTINUED

I AM THE MULE

by Will Chamberlain

I AM the mule, from ears which catch the gale
To that unresting terminus, my tail;
From downcast head and eye upon the soil
Where burdens chain me to the post of toil,
To my one quick defense, the nimble heel,
Which lashing tyrants sometimes justly feel.
I climb the mountains where the eagles rule
And tramp the dingy mine-path—I, the mule.

I am the mule—the butt of countless jokes—
But since time was my neck has known the yokes
Of labor merciless, of crushing tasks which tell
Of human cruelty which breeds a human hell.
But as for me, without a sigh or tear,
Heat, cold or storm, I get my hell right here—
On city street, in miry, rustic pool;
My prayer a bray for pity on the mule.

I am the mule—where snows eternal cling,
Or where the tropics flaunt perpetual Spring
On trails which hide behind the mask of night,
Where cotton bales are stacked and blackskins fight,
Where bleak Alaska binds a pack of dust
Upon my spine—the spoils of human lust—
Or where for heartless Cubans I'm the tool
To pull the ponderous cane-carts—I, the mule.

I am the mule, and when men madly fly
To belching guns and paint a war-red sky,
And cities tumble and armadas sink,
I drag the cannons while the cowards slink.
And when are ended all the blood-wet days
Who ever hears for me a note of praise—
I who have triumphs fashioned in the school
Of world events—your humble slave—the mule.

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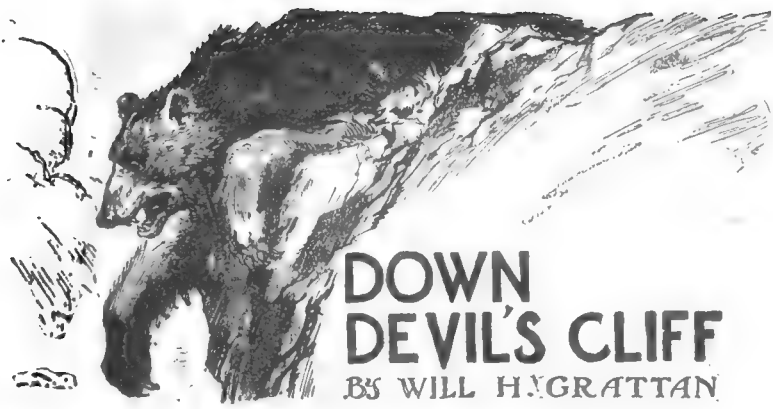

DOWN DEVIL'S CLIFF

BY WILL H. GRATTAN

FOR almost seven months, old Bob Willets had had no visitor in his log-cabin high on Bald Eagle Mountain. His only companions had been the snow that sifted heap on heap, the bitter cold, the clear air of the Rockies that struck the senses like heady nectar, his fireplace with the crooked chimney, much bacon—and a hope.

Here it was early May at last and the first visitor of the season had arrived.

Yet Willets wasn't pleased. Emphatically the opposite.

To show his entire disapproval, he left in haste the shed he had been repairing and, after a rapid glance behind to assure himself it wasn't an apparition that pursued, he slid over the edge of Devil's Cliff.

"Whew!" murmured old Willets, digging in with hands and feet for support on outcroppings of rock and tenuous roots. For Devil's Cliff was sheer descent for nearly a hundred feet, perpendicular as the shaft of a sky-scraper.

A long, lean muzzle stuck out over the top of the cliff and a pair of little, piggish eyes peered down.

A big grizzly, fierce, hungry, after his long Winter's sleep, waggled his head angrily at this provoking escape. He was pondering, it appeared, whether it would be feasible to follow the man. An instant later, he withdrew his head and thrust over a huge, hairy paw. Bruin was decidedly loath to let outwit him this unarmed human he had so hugely surprized.

Willets quickly clambered a couple of feet lower.

"You got too much sense to come down here, old boy," he said aloud.

But the veteran prospector and huntsman did not fancy his footing. As he sought for a better hold on the precarious wall of rock and dirt, he was startled by cackling laughter below him.

Willets' first thought was of relief that aid had come, even though it did reveal his humiliation. As he wondered if he dared to twist his neck about to see the newcomer, a voice that he knew sang out.

And the heart of Willets sank as he heard.

"Well, that's sure a good 'un," said the strident voice. "If I'd tried a thousand years I couldn't fixed it better than this. Ho, you old Hairy Face, now I've got you jest where I wants you."

He laughed again, an ugly, evil, gloating laugh, and as the echoes died a bullet spat against the cliff, not five feet above Willets' head. The old mountaineer ducked to shed the shower of dirt and small rocks that followed. With great difficulty, he maintained his footing on the lofty cliff.

"What you tryin' to do, you 'tarnation fool?" shouted Willets.

Between guffaws of laughter, the fellow at the cliff's foot let fly a string of profanity that made the prospector blush beneath his beard.

"I thought you was tucked away down in Cañon City, Joe Schimpf," cried Willets.

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"——, you don't suppose we was goin' to let any penitentiary keep us from gettin' even with you, do you, you yellow-bellied old traitor?" answered Schimpf.

"Come on, now. Climb down there in a hurry. And don't look around, neither. I don't like your face. If you do I'll peg you right where you are. There was six shots in this gun and that's all I'm a-goin' to need. I used one an' I'm keepin' the rest for your special benefit. There'll be plenty left when you hit the ground down here. Get a move on, Hairy Face."

Willets did not stir at once. He waited to consider. That Schimpf meant to kill him seemed certain. He knew Schimpf and his pals ached to get revenge on him because he had turned them up to the authorities as the wretched crooks they were. But he had expected that it would be years before they would be at liberty to carry out their threats to "get" him.

To think that Schimpf should be the one to find him there, spread out like an old bobcat's hide on the face of Devil's Cliff!

"You ain't told me yet how you come to be here," temporized Willets.

"Get down a little lower an' I will," came the answer. "Hurry, now."

A second shot landed in the cliff a short distance to the right of the helpless prospector.

Slowly, Willets crawled down to the next jutting ridge of rocks, a hump not so wide as his hand.

"If you do for me, then you will go to the pen an' you'll not come out alive either," threatened the mountaineer.

"Don't you worry about me none," replied Schimpf. "My pals Burliss and Duncan lied to the jury so's they could clear me an send me up here to take care of you. I've got a job o' work. You're it. By the time they find your body I'll be down in Mexico or over in Russia, or somewheres safe. Don't you worry, Hairy Face."

"I only did what was my duty as a citizen," expostulated Willets. "You got to admit that, haven't you? And I wouldn't 've turned you in at that, after you spent all Winter afore last up to my cabin, if it hadn't been for you hurtin' that old woman to get her diamonds. That's what got my goat, Schimpf. You know that wa'n't right."

"——'s bells!" said Schimpf. "What 'd she want of all them jewels! We had as much right to them as her. Just 'cause she's a woman! Why all this fuss about robbin' a woman, anyways? They're jest a painted-up, dew-dadded bunch."

"That what you think about your mother?" demanded the mountaineer.

"Never mind that gush," answered Schimpf. "You can't make me lay off my job o' work. You ain't makin' much headway there. I'm goin' to count ten an' if you ain't moved——"

Quickly revolving in his mind his chances for life against the fiend below, Willets let himself down another notch on the rocky wall. He could make it to the bottom, he thought, if he used every precaution and did not happen to start a slide of dirt and stones. But what would it avail him if a bullet was to be his reward?

He thought of what Schimpf had said about six shots. If he could just draw enough to leave Schimpf with only one bullet when he landed on the solid earth below there might be a chance, just a chance.

"That's a little better," called out the crook. "Now jest keep a-comin'. I ain't goin' to waste any shots on you, remember."

"He must 'a' read what I was thinkin'," marveled Willets. "Anyways, it's worth tryin'."

But he kept on climbing down, slowly but surely, realizing that he must give Schimpf's mind time to switch off the bullet-wasting if he was to draw his fire.

The prospector's gaze roamed upward at the snow-streaked heights of Bald Eagle Mountain. How many hundreds of times had he seen the giant peak crimson at dawn and sunset! He was to view that wonderwork of the Master Painter never again, he thought, with a little shiver of regret.

And the mountain-lion he had shot on the rimrock of Sliver Cañon the month before—the hide still hung in his cabin—was that to be the last preying beast brought down by his rifle? Willets believed that the odds were about one hundred to one that way. What wouldn't he have given for that rifle now!

Anyway, he was glad that Roger, the dog, was gone. It had been a lonesome Winter without him, but he would hate to leave even a dog to mourn him.

The long Winter in the snowbound cabin, the coming of the first thaw, then the winged camp-robber that had ushered in

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the real Spring! It was hard to miss the glory of another Summer in this mountain wonderland, Willets decided.

His soliloquy was interrupted by another bullet, a bit below him this time.

"Three," tallied the mountaineer.

"Next time, I'll wing you, sure," roared Schimpf. "—— you, what do you think you're doing? You're slower than a glacier. Get a move or I'll knock you over sure's ——"

More profanity followed. Schimpf's temper was rising to a combustion point. Willets recognized it.

"Might just 's well drop and have it over," he reasoned. "Schimpf 'll torture me, more 'n likely, if he gits me down there."

But painfully, laboriously, he resumed his slow crawl down the cliff. Willets belonged to the tribe of never-give-ups. If he hadn't he wouldn't have remained prospecting for a lost hope for years and years. Partners had come and gone, full of vigor at first under the old-timer's roseate painting of riches waiting the discoverer, disgusted at last after fruitless searching.

Willets had paid his way along with his markmanship, though. The hides in his cabin were to remunerate the storekeeper down at Frosty, a town tucked away in the folds of the Great Divide, for the provisions that had kept Willets through the Winter.

"Say, Hairy Face," Schimpf was saying. "Maybe, you don't think it was good to get out o' jail an' come tearin' up here to get you, soon's the snow cleared. You bet I know how Burliss and Duncan is sufferin' now down 't Cañon pen. I'm goin' to fix you, though, so you won't turn up any more of us boys who's willin' to take chances now and then to get what the world's owin' us."

"The world ain't owin' you nothin' but a couple yards o' hemp, Joe Schimpf," retorted Willets.

His finger-nails were worn to the quick by the labor of his descent. Oh, what a wonderful thing it would be to get his hands on the throat of the waiting thief and would-be slayer! Or just one solid punch at that ugly jaw! Although Willets hadn't turned his head to look at Schimpf, remembering the other's threat, he had no trouble recalling the fellow's evil face.

"Umph!"

Willets almost slipped that time. He dug his fingers deeper in the earth, at the spot where Schimpf's latest bullet had plowed in.

In a recess, Willets' eye was caught by something that glittered, heavy yellow, in a rock the shot had uncovered. For an instant, he forgot his peril, as he stared curiously. Amazement turned to belief. He dug in frantically about the stone, at great risk of plunging to death on the rocks below.

Schimpf thought he was merely trying for a secure hold.

"Come on down a little, Hairy Face," he ordered. "There's a good ridge o' rock jest below you. I don't want to miss the fun o' killin' you jest as you take the last step off that cliff."

Mumbling crazily to himself, Willets did as he was bid.

"It's the lost vein," he told himself. "I'm sure of it. After all these years. And that fiend will do me out of it."

The thought of bribing Schimpf by offering to take him in on the discovery in return for sparing his life was discarded almost as soon as it came.

"That would only make him more certain to kill me, so he could work the claim himself," decided the old prospector.

Gingerly, Willets crept inch by inch down the rocky wall. More than ever, he wanted to live. More than ever, death seemed certain.

A fourth shot crumpled the earth almost at the mountaineer's elbow.

"Only two more," Schimpf cried out. "I don't aim to let go any more now until the last. The next time I shoot to kill."

"Why don't you do it now?" rasped out Willets. "I don't want to look at your ugly mug afore I die."

A perfect fury of oaths greeted this remark. Then came another burst of cacophonic laughter.

"Only to think I found the high and mighty hunter, old Hairy Face himself, chased by a grizzly!" roared Schimpf. "Wait till I write that to the boys down in Cañon."

Willets by now had reached a position where one long step would land him on the ground. He determined when he next moved to make a quick sidewise jump, swerve and dash on Schimpf in a desperate fight for life. He expected that he would

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be shot dead in the attempt, but it was better, at least, than any program of torture the fellow might be saving for him.

Schimpf berated him with horrible oaths, commanding him to take the last step.

"Where's your nerve?" he sneered.

Hardly were the words out of his mouth than there came a deep, terrifying roar; then a shriek of horror, and a shot.

Careless of Schimpf's threats, of everything but interest in the titanic battle he felt to be underway, Willets turned his head. He saw the great grizzly, the same that had sent him fleeing over the edge of Devil's Cliff and then evidently had scrambled below by means of the trail, rear up on his gaunt legs and rush with awesome speed upon the startled Schimpf.

The desperado's first shot had only wounded the shoulder of the huge animal. There was but one more cartridge in the gun. Before Schimpf could fire again, the beast was upon him. One great paw pressed down his shooting arm. The other clawed at his face.

Schimpf fought with the madness of desperation, sobbing, moaning. Up came his arm at last, enough to send the final bullet into the brain of the hulking beast.

But even as the animal fell in the death agony, one of the mighty paws clawed at Schimpf's throat, tore it horribly, mortally. Man and beast went to the earth, breathing their last.

His brow as white as the snowy whiskers that had made Schimpf call him Hairy Face, Willets took the last step to the ground—and safety.

WRECK OF THE SHIP *PRIMROSE**

by Bill Adams

DAWN by the dockside, cold wind blowing,
A clipper cleared to sail;
A gangway lantern lights the snowing
Deep on her deck and rail.

Lights at the dockside, early dawning,
The houses dark and tight:
Voices call o'er the chill sea dawning—
A tow-line stretching tight.

Never a star above the river,
Never a farewell cry;
Never a flag to dance and quiver
Under the Winter sky.

Outward bound for the far sea's trailing,
Bound for the looms of fate;
Bound for the deeps, where petrels, sailing,
Scream of the old sea's hate.

Thirty sailors, and thirty singing,
Stretching the white sails tight;
Tones of a ship's bells faintly ringing
Low o'er the rims of night.

Morning cold, on a cold sea lifting;
Breakers surge and roll;
Thirty dead men's bodies drifting—
Toll of the old sea's toll.

"*Wreck of the Ship* Primrose," *copyright*, 1923, *by B. M. Adams.*

* Four-masted bark *Primrose Hill*, wrecked on Stag Rock, Christmas day, 1899, five hours out, Liverpool to Frisco. Lost with all hands.

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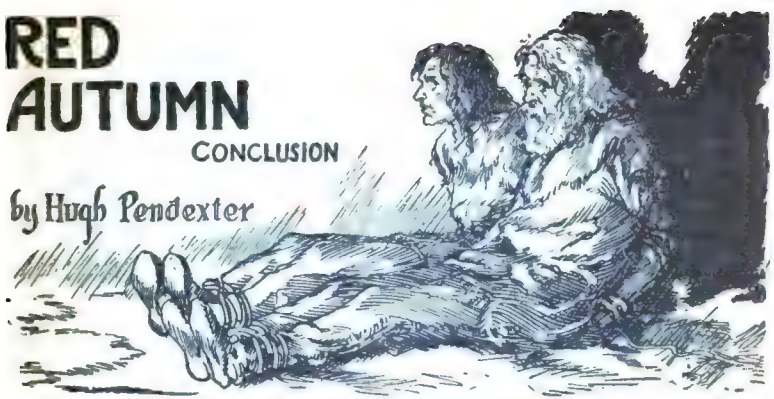
RED AUTUMN

CONCLUSION



by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Tameless Days," "Long Rifles," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

WHEN the United States declared war against Great Britain in June, 1812, I was despatched on a keelboat expedition to carry the news to Manuel Lisa—"Mr. Manuel"—founder of the Missouri Fur Company, who was trading with the Indians along the upper Missouri River. Speed was imperative, for if word should come to the hostile Sioux from Canada first, Mr. Manuel would be trapped. For a year past, British agents had been urging the nations of the upper regions to join Tecumseh's confederacy; and with the exception of one or two tribes, they were in an ugly mood.

The same special knowledge of Indian conditions, especially among the Mandan tribe, that had earned me the nickname of "Mandan" Ramsay resulted in my appointment as *bourgeois*, or head, of the expedition sent to warn Mr. Manuel.

Our start was made from St. Louis in June, and by the latter part of September I had got the news to him. Briefly I summarized our long trip—how we had unwittingly shipped two British agents named Le Fou and Balise, who had tried to murder us and then had made off to the hostile Indians, Le Fou carrying with him a package of arsenic. They were now working, I believed, in cooperation with a medicine man named Medicine Crow and with Le Borgne (the Blind) a one-eyed chief of Hidatsa, chief village of the Minnetaree tribe.

"The sooner you get to the Minnetarees the better," Mr. Manuel told me. "You will find the British flag flying in their villages. You must demand that it be lowered and the United States flag raised. While you are gone I shall be kicking the Canadian traders out of the Sioux villages."

Next day I started, accompanied by one of our hunters, a giant American named Richardson. On our journey we encountered a hostile Sioux band, and before we could get away we had to kill a Minnetaree who was riding with them.

The Sioux gave chase, and we entered the Mandan village of my friend Shahaka for protection. At this time of year the truce of the corn-trading season was effective in the villages of all tribes hereabout, though warfare was actively waged on the plains outside.

Here I met my enemy Balise. The latter had already raised the British flag.

"Being Shahaka's friends," I said, "the Americans will not shed blood and break the law of the village during the corn-trading season. Yet the flag of my people's enemies should not be seen in the village. Balise will go outside with me. He will pull down his flag, or I will beat him like a squaw."

"I have killed men with my bare hands," snarled Balise, "and I will kill you."

I flung out my hands for room in which to fight.

BALISE'S tactics, learned in the school of frontier fighting, had none of the earmarks of fairness, and he gouged and bit me at every opportunity. We were both fairly exhausted before I managed to get in a blow that dropped him. In a few minutes the British flag was lowered and the American flag put in its place. In spite of Shahaka's plea that we remain in his village and trade solely with him, I sent Richardson ahead to find Red Shield, a friendly chief of the Minnetarees. When I set out behind him Shahaka insisted on escorting me part of the way.

From Red Shield we learned that Elk's Tooth, an important warrior at Hidatsa, Le Borgne's village, had mysteriously died. We decided to visit the village, cover the dead man's body with presents from the Great White Father and investigate.

At Hidatsa we found Medicine Crow, who was rapidly influencing the tribe against the Americans. Le Fou, who chose to turn up at this time, was creating unlimited awe with his strange mannerisms and antics. I accused him of having used arsenic in our camp, and he became defiant.

"I shall be greater than any red man after you Americans are driven down the river!" he cried.

While wandering through the village we encountered a sick warrior named Black Deer, who told

"*Red Autumn*," *copyright, 1923, by Hugh Pendexter.*

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us that Le Fou was *mahopa*, or "touched," and therefore sacred. He also said that Le Fou had had a dream in which Elk's Tooth appeared and that the *mahopa* man prophesied his death. Soon afterward Elk's Tooth died. He spoke mysteriously of some medicine he had found in the dead man's hut. This information set Richardson to thinking—with good results, as I was to learn later.

After we had covered Elk's Tooth's body with gifts, we learned that that night a powwow would be held and that Le Fou would recount a new dream, naming another victim. I felt it would be I.

With the tribe gathered in a circle about a fire the powwow began. With his pet crow on his shoulder, Medicine Crow launched a fierce tirade against the Americans. Red Shield then rose and even in spite of his stirring address had all he could do to reassure the Indians. Then Le Borgne began to speak, and by siding with Medicine Crow overwhelmed the good effect of Red Shield's address.

At this point a friendly Indian thrust a letter into my hands, but the excitement was so intense that I did not have time to read it then.

Le Fou began his part in the ceremony, circling gradually toward me. It was evident that he would name me as the next victim. Here Medicine Crow's pet crow hopped into his path and Richardson suddenly tossed a piece of meat, poisoned with arsenic, to it. This was the medicine that Black Deer had referred to. Just as Le Fou was about to name me the crow dropped dead. Richardson sprang up, crying:

"It was the medicine crow he dreamed about! Look!"

Consternation prevailed, and Le Fou's power began to be openly discredited. Hastily opening my letter, I found it was from Mr. Manuel. He stated that the Sioux were causing him trouble, but that he would endeavor to join me if absolutely necessary. He also warned me against the appearance of a medicine-man named Medicine Crow, who was really Tenskawatawa, brother of Tecumseh, prophet, loser of the fight at Tippecanoe. Mr. Manuel advised me first to expose Medicine Crow, and then if possible kill him.

RICHARDSON wanted to go straight to the heads of the tribe and exposing Medicine Crow, but Red Shield counseled against it. He said:

"Why worry a strong medicine? Tenskwatawa does not wish to be known."

Desiring, however, at least to let Medicine Crow know that we had his identity in our keeping, I found him and told him what I knew. He was not alarmed. I said to him—

"If you leave this village with the *mahopa* man I shall hold my tongue."

I also warned him that should the Minnetarees learn who he was they would no longer follow his counsel.

Medicine Crow replied haughtily:

"The white man has a straight tongue. He speaks what he believes."

And thus he terminated the interview.

After being refused by a number of the tribe, I finally succeeded in getting Black Deer to agree to take a message to Mr. Manuel. While I was in our tent Black Deer rushed in, telling me that Medicine Crow, the *mahopa* man and Balise were leaving the village. This made me suspicious. I hastily finished my letter to Mr. Manuel and dispatched it by Black Deer.

As I was retiring a strange Indian appeared at the door of my tent. He told me that some white men at Fort Lisa asked that Richardson and I come to see them.

In spite of the fact that we were perplexed over this strange invitation, Richardson and I left without saying good-by to Red Shield and set out for the fort. Arriving there, we at once became suspicious when we found the fort deserted.

JUST as we were leaving, a large band of Indians appeared, and we found ourselves the prisoners of Medicine Crow, Balise, the *mahopa* man and their followers. We were securely bound and told word would be sent to Mr. Manuel, advising him that unless he left the trading-post at once Richardson and I would be killed. This information worried me, particularly as I thought in any event we would be killed and I did not wish Mr. Manuel to sacrifice his work uselessly.

During the night the camp was aroused by the arrival of a horseman who brought news of a big fight near the lower Mandan village, between the Sioux and the Mandans. He also stated that Shahaka and Little Crow had been killed.

This news greatly excited Le Borgne, as he took it to mean that once Red Shield was put out of the way he would become chief of all the villages.

The next morning it was decided that the leaders should go back to Hidatsa and take steps for the removal of Red Shield. We were to be conveyed to a safe hiding-place and guards placed over us. Balise, who had been becoming arrogant lately, insulted the *mahopa* man and then struck him. This infuriated the Indians, and Balise was bound and placed with us, a prisoner.

We were taken to a cave near the House of the Infants. When our guards grew drowsy Balise freed himself and then cut our bonds, declaring that we would join factions. When our guards came at us we killed them and secreted the bodies.

We hid most of the day. Balise left us to scout around and was gone for several hours. That night when he returned we decided to go back to Hidatsa and confront our erstwhile captors.

As we were going through a narrow ravine we heard a sudden noise. As I turned to assure Richardson, who was behind me, that it was simply an animal, I was horrified to see three Indians leap down from the rocks and overpower him. I shouted to Balise to charge them, when the scoundrel suddenly turned on me, knocking me senseless with the butt of his rifle.

WHEN I opened my eyes it was to find that Richardson, like myself, was tightly bound. Balise, standing free and still retaining his rifle, was talking animatedly with eight Minnetaree men. Three of these were our surviving guards. My head felt as if it were split in two, and I could feel the blood trickling down my face.

"What ——'s work is this?" I managed to demand.

"Ah, *m'sieur* wakes again. The sun was

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warm and made him sleepy," politely responded Balise, turning from the Indians to give me his attention.

"You betrayed us!"

"Alas! *M'sieur* raves. That is why he is made fast. When he went mad his kind friends feared he would do himself harm."

"Balise of Balise, if ever I get free——"

"Shut up, Mandan Ramsay!" choked Richardson. "The cowardly wolf has trapped us. It makes him laugh to hear you splutter. No good in talking. Them shooting stars meant business."

My rage at the infernal treachery came under control as I heard the hunter's advice. Placing it aside as something to be satiated later, I endeavored to straighten out the curious kinks leading up to our recapture.

"Have they forgiven us the dead guards?" I asked Balise.

He frowned a bit and counseled:

"If *m'sieur* is wise he will not dwell on that subject. They think the guards took fright and ran away. I have told them that. They think you two got free and escaped and left me tied up. They know how I managed to get rid of my ropes and how I went in search of you to capture you. I have told them I knew they were my brothers and would not harm me even if they did act foolish and hitch my arms and legs together."

"They may be made to see the truth even if a prisoner tells them. Your lies may not hold together."

He shook his head and threatened:

"If you speak of the dead men to them I will say you have told me that you and the hunter saw the guards go back to the cave and followed them and killed them, and then hid their bodies. Your shoulders are broad, but are they broad enough to shoulder those three deaths?"

"You snake!"

His face took on a snarling expression as he flung back:

"*Sieur de*—the man from Balise never has forgotten the fight at Shahaka's village. And, oh, you shall pay for that! You shall pay most dearly and thoroughly!"

"Set me free, unarmed. You, armed, meet me again."

"Mandan Ramsay, you keep shet," wrathfully broke in the hunter. "Can't you see the —— skunk is making game of you? He dassent meet a one-armed man in a real fight. That's why they kicked him out of France—'cause he's a coward."

Balise leaned forward and pressed the point of his knife against the hunter's throat until the blood came. Richardson told him:

"You're my meat. I'll kill you before the next moon. Remember, I'll kill you. My medicine tells me that. There was a shooting star for you, and you'll git your dose yet."

I feared the Frenchman was to make an end of my friend on the spot; but two of the Indians forced him back, helped us to our feet and removed the ankle thongs. Two horses were brought down the path, the hunter and I were lifted on to them, and the march to the village began.

Balise had regained control of his temper and walked by my side, laughing silently every time he glanced up at my battered head and bloody face. I, too, had mastered my wild anger, and I asked him—

"Just what did you do?"

In English and speaking rapidly, so the Indians could not catch it, he readily explained:

"Ran away from you the minute we took to different rocks on seeing the guards returning to the cave. I made direct for the village. Went afoot as I feared the guards would catch me if I went back for a horse. I got there ahead of them and told them how you two escaped when the men left us alone. I told Le Borgne that I could have left the country, but that I knew the Minnetarees were my friends and would not tie me up again.

"I said I had noticed tracks near the mouth of the House of the Infants; and offered to decoy you two into an ambush, provided the chief swore on the pipe I should not be annoyed again for slapping that pig of a Le Fou in the face. Le Borgne and the Shawnee were eager to agree to any terms once the guards came in and reported our escape and the disappearance of their three companions. And as the man from Balise is sometimes a man of his word I am here, and you and your big friend are here. You will learn your fate in Hidatsa."

I heard this unmoved, for there was no satisfaction in denouncing the villain. Also, I found a crumb of comfort in his talk; we were not to be done to death in the wild, broken country. Once we were back in the village several things might happen.

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I had made a terrible mistake in not striking for the village immediately after escaping from the first cave. Our appearance would have interfered with Le Borgne's plans, and at the worst we would have been made prisoners again. The publicity of our arrival and the worst Le Borgne would have dared to do would reach all villages on the Knife and Missouri. Red Shield and his friends would quickly learn of our plight; Mr. Manuel would be soon informed. Forced to work in the light, the Blind and the Shawnee would find it a hard trail to travel.

I confessed my great fault to Richardson, speaking in Osage as Balise had shown but little familiarity with that tongue when we questioned him at the time he joined our outfit. With scarcely a movement of the lips I gave the gist of my thoughts and assumed all the blame. Balise was uneasy when he could not follow my talk, and harshly ordered me to be silent.

Richardson answered me, insisting that our first great mistake had been to spare the Frenchman's life. The Indian at his side threatened him with the flat of his ax, and the hunter shifted to the Minnetaree speech and declared that the meteors had exhausted their bad luck so far as he and I were concerned, and that once we were back within reach of Red Shield's influence all would be well. In English he heartily concluded—

"—— hard work to hide us in a Injun village, Mandan Ramsay."

Balise glared back at him, then said to me:

"*M'sieur* will be surprized to learn no one will know when he enters the village, or that he is there until he is inside Le Borgne's big hut. No one will try to rescue him after he goes before the chief."

I was determined to hold no more powwows with the traitor, but there was an assurance in his voice that troubled me. Only on Le Borgne's orders and with the approval of the astute Tenskwatawa would the men take us to the village.

But for the life of me I could not see how our arrival could be kept a secret. A night entry was not on the program as we were traveling direct and making good time. The village was only a few miles away, and the sun was not yet down. Even if we halted outside the village until night our coming would set the dogs to barking and the Minnetarees to peeping and spying or openly taking to the lanes to learn what was happening.

Yet Le Borgne and the Shawnee were very wise men, and they would not, especially the latter, make a foolish move. The Frenchman studied my face and guessed something of my bewilderment and with a chuckle declared:

"It's all very simple and yet very safe. You shall see. Now two of the men ride ahead. Their departure is very significant."

This reduction of our forces told me nothing; and yet it all was very simple, even as Balise had said. By the time we passed through the last hollow and were catching our first glimpse of the village the sun was slipping from sight. The rounded domes of the big lodges stood out in distinct detail. Our flag no longer flew from the staff Richardson had rigged. I broke my silence to ask Balise—

"Is Red Shield in the village?"

"He was not when I left there. He had gone to the middle village. He may have come back; but it doesn't matter. He will not see you, *m'sieur*, nor suspect your presence. Death of my life, but M'sieur Ramsay must pay me compliments when he learns the scheme was mine and when he sees how effective it is!"

We halted at the mouth of the hollow and saw the scouts gallop toward the village, and as they advanced all other signs of life had vanished. But Balise had spoken inaccurately when he said we were to enter Hidatsa, for we came to a halt in the timber near the village where stood a small lodge.

What had been puzzling me was suddenly made clear. The scouts had gone ahead to warn all Minnetarees loitering outside the village and in the lanes that eagle-hunters were returning to their eagle-medicine lodge in the timber. When eagle-hunters come back from their traps in the hills at sunset the men, women, and children frantically run into their lodges so they may not see any of the hunters and spoil the medicine. The two men in advance had banished every living soul to the huts; nor would any of the Minnetarees dare to spy on the timber surreptitiously.

We were helped from our horses, taken into the lodge and placed on the right side, the section reserved for visitors. The hide, stretched on a frame, dropped back in place and snugly covered the low doorway.

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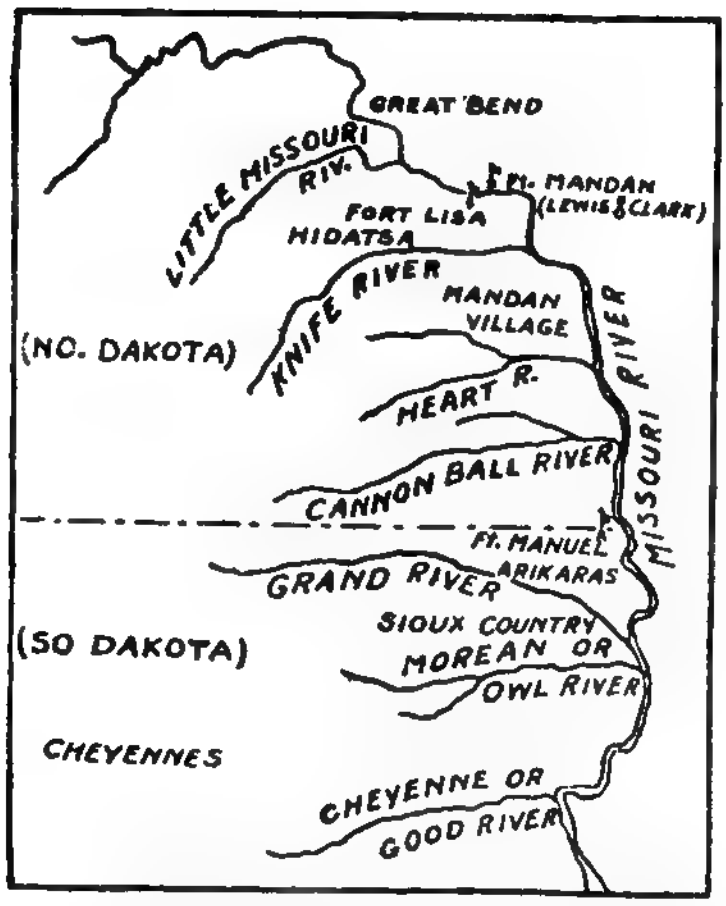

Opposite the door stood the medicine log, or altar, with its array of charms. Our guards occupied the left side of the lodge, the section reserved for the hunters. The ground along the wall was covered with hay. Only hunters and their visitors could enter the lodge, although women usually brought the food and water to the door. Whether Balise, Le Borgne or the Shawnee was responsible for the scheme it was a most excellent one for insuring secrecy.

Our captors, now turned eagle-hunters, had been selected from the Blind's faithful followers. Each group of hunters devoted four days and nights to the trapping of eagles, and during that period no one would venture near the timber except as the women would bring their kettles after sundown. If it should be necessary to hold us isolated for a longer time our guards would be replaced by another loyal group; and so on until there was no further point in keeping us secreted.

A SMALL fire was started in the fire-hole and fed with bundles of dried grass and small branches. In the fitful light we saw our guards lolling on the hay. Balise, who had no right to sit among them, his status being that of a visitor, did not sit down with us but remained by the door. He told the men:

"I am going out. See they do not make any noise when the women bring the kettles."

A Minnetaree, who was one of our original guards, drew his knife and felt of the edge significantly. With a grin and a low bow the Frenchman wished us a pleasant night and slipped through the exit, taking care to pull the hide back from the side we occupied. The Indians are punctilious in observing all the rites in entering and leaving an eagle-lodge so as not to weaken the medicine. The hunter and visitor crowd close to their respective sides of the doorway.

"Mandan Ramsay, what do you make of it?" whispered Richardson.

My head ached villainously, and conversation seemed to be useless. I shook my head, and he continued:

"Anyway it's a —— sight better'n being cooped up in that cave with all that chittering of the Little People going on. But I ain't hankering for what they'll be doing to us next. Will Mr. Manuel quit his post?"

I shook my head violently.

"That was a fool question," he mumbled. "He won't quit us, neither. I'd like to know how Le Fou takes the Frenchman's return. Wonder if they'll send a lock of my ha'r and my rifle to show him they mean business? I knew them shooting stars was bad medicine for us. But, —— it! I can't help feeling we've traveled over the highest ridge of our trouble. Just feel that way; that's all.

"But where does Balise fit in? There was a star for him. That means he's got to bump into trouble some time. 'Tain't fair for us to have all the bad luck. Wish I could sink my hooks into him! That's all the bad luck I'd be wishing for him. Any use making a bleat when the women fetch the kettles?"

"No," I told him. "They would think it was medicine voices. And the men would gag us. We won't get clear that way. Our only chance is for them to hold us until some word can leak down-river to Mr. Manuel."

"Don't count on the *bourgeois*. Even if Black Deer has guts 'nough to make the trip it'll all be finished for us before Mr. Manuel can do anything. For all we know he may be off on a long trip to the Sioux, carrying Arikara pipes. Nothing but our own medicine can save us, and mine ain't making me feel real wolfish round the heart yet."

A guard lifted his knife by the tip and

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threw it point first into the wall six inches above the hunter's head. This admonition was quickly heeded.

We watched the fire die down and leap up for nearly an hour. The dusk was thick in the timber by this time. Then came the soft sound of scurrying steps outside the door. Two men glided to us, one of them being the knife-thrower. The latter recovered his knife and held the point at the hunter's throat. The other did a similar service for me.

The stealthy sounds receded, and a man reached under the hide and dragged in a kettle of boiled meat and a mash of dried berries and buffalo fat. We were propped against the wall in a sitting posture, and our hands freed, and with knives held ready to rip open our gullets did we make a hostile move we were permitted to eat. Another kettle, containing water, was brought in, and we drank our fill. I had hoped we would be indulged in the luxury of a pipe, but after we had drunk our hands were secured, and all but two of the men ate their supper.

The exceptions were the first of the hunters to go after eagles, and they must fast until midnight. While quick to utilize the lodge to further his schemes, even the Blind would not dare violate the medicine of the place. So long as we were held there some of the men must endeavor to trap eagles, and having assumed the rôle they must observe all the rites. The two men who were fasting acted as guards, and their companions composed themselves on the hay for the night.

The hunter and I at last fell asleep. At midnight I was aroused by the hunters breaking their fast, only they ate sparingly and drank but little water. For the next twenty-four hours they must not touch food or water.

In the morning my head was still aching, and from the feeling I knew that the rifle-butt had raised a big lump. The night guards were missing, having departed shortly before sunrise to their traps in the hills. The women came early with meat and water and took away the empty kettles. After we had eaten, the Minnetarees took turns in walking through the grove. The timber was tabu day and night to all but the hunters and their visitors so long as the lodge was being used.

The time crawled slowly, and my limbs became so benumbed that I insisted on being released for a spell. Finally the men untied my ankles and allowed me to exercise my legs; then trussed them up and released my hands. Our escape from the cave had given us a bad reputation, and they were taking no chances. After I had been secured the hunter was similarly indulged.

But the waiting became so intolerable that once more I tried my eloquence and insisted on being allowed some fresh air. They paid no heed until I suggested that one of us be taken into the timber at a time, the other remaining helplessly bound and a hostage for the first man's return. Because they were weary of remaining inactive rather than from any humane motives they agreed to my proposition and said I should go first.

Never have I appreciated sunshine and free air more than when they were helping me through the doorway. They placed a noose around my neck and kept my hands fastened at my back, and in this fashion conducted me for a half-mile walk. Richardson was then taken out and did not return until near sunset.

Shortly after he was brought in the two hunters arrived. They showed the need of food and water, especially the latter, and kept licking their dry lips. When the women brought the kettles these two threw themselves on their faces in the hay so as not to torture themselves by the sight of meat and drink. Richardson bethought himself to make a gurgling noise when he drank, which put a fine edge on the hunters' thirst. They had trapped no eagles, and their fasting must continue.

Having been fed and watered, I told them:

"You have spoiled the medicine of this lodge by using it for prisoners. Your traps will remain empty until you have built a new lodge. Your chief listened to the evil talk of the Frenchman. All day he has kept away. He knows he has spoiled this place."

The hunters lifted their heads and glared at me murderously, then exchanged uneasy glances and resumed the ordeal of waiting until midnight, when it would be permitted for them to eat a bit and drink much less than they craved. The other guards talked in low tones and gave me the impression that they worried. I knew enough of their

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nature to guess the reason; they feared that they had profaned a sacred place.

One of them unconsciously betrayed his unspoken thoughts when he held up his hands and worked the fingers back and forth. The seed of fear was blossoming into the dread of his hands being crippled by a captured eagle. He was remembering that Black Deer had been maimed for life and condemned to help the women with their planting and harvesting simply because he forgot and spat on the cleared floor of the lodge instead of in the hay.

It was several hours after we had eaten that Balise appeared. He entered hurriedly, pressing close to the right of the door, took up a position by the side of the hunter and announced to the Indians:

"It is time. The village is in the huts. Let the white men be tied and gagged."

I broke into a cold sweat. The hunter hoarsely denounced:

"You don't dast finish us here, you —— skunk. 'Fraid you'll git the Injuns riled by spoiling their eagle medicine. They know you've done that already. And I'll tell you this, you river rat; your own medicine is past mending. A shooting star with your name cut across the sky night before last. You're done for. It takes four days for a Minnetaree to wholly die. You'll beat that time. You'll be all dead before four days is up. And your body won't be covered with no gifts."

Balise stooped forward, struck him across the mouth and gritted—

"Medicine or no medicine, I'll cut your throat if you talk like that to me again."

Richardson fairly whimpered with rage, and I knew by the congested veins on his forehead that he was exerting all his tremendous strength in an effort to burst his bonds.

"Soft and easy," I told him. "We must wait; but the debt shall be paid."

"Oh, my ——!" he moaned. "For just half a minute alone with him!"

Balise stared at him speculatively. His voice was low and smooth as he murmured:

"I see, *m'sieur* the hunter, it will not be well for the man from Balise if you go on living. I see there is not enough room on the upper Missouri for the two of us."

"Not 'nough room in all North America," groaned Richardson.

"Then I must make sure that you die very soon."

"Balise, where are we to be taken?" I demanded.

"You will know when you get there," he surlily told me and with his eyes still on the hunter's face.

"To Le Borgne's hut, of course. Do not gag or tie us. We will give our word to walk along quietly and make no outcry."

He tore his gaze from the hunter and politely answered:

"*M'sieur*, I do not doubt your honor, although a man will do anything to save his life. Not that it would do any good for you to cry out or to try to escape. But we must gag this other man and tie him and carry him on poles. I shall see that he has not the slightest chance to do harm. And as he is treated, so you will be treated. Let the Minnetarees do as the Blind has told them, through me, to do."

Gags of rawhide were forced between our teeth, and our ankles and wrists made doubly secure. Then we were dragged from the lodge and placed on stretchers of willow and carried to the village.

The night was very dark among the big lodges. The village curs set up a barking and snarling, but we encountered no one as we picked our way through the narrow lanes. Had I not known our destination I would have had no idea where we were being conveyed. At last we halted before a porch and word was grunted at the door. The door opened, and we were taken inside. Once more I found myself in the hut of the Blind.

WE WERE dumped on the ground in the middle of the lodge and the gags removed. The chief and the Shawnee were seated by the medicine log and gave no heed to our entrance. Le Fou was reclining on a robe near them.

Around one side of the lodge and facing the entrance were some thirty warriors. Against the wall near the door steaming kettles of meat were waiting to be served. Le Fou scrambled to his feet, but appeared to be more interested in Balise than in us.

The half-wit's manner was changed; I believed he was afraid of something. He was naked to the loins, but wore no paint except a death's head on his flat chest. He kept his gaze fastened on the Frenchman, although the latter gave no sign of beholding him. Balise by his cunning and undoubted intellectual gifts had won back a high place in the red men's favor.

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As obviously Le Fou, while always a *mahopa* man, had lost in prestige. His status among the Minnetarees had commenced to decline the night the tame crow was killed. He was still credited with possessing a powerful medicine, but it was suspected he could no longer control it; and a runaway medicine is a very dangerous thing. His person would always be sacred so far as the Indians were concerned, yet they would not be surprized if his medicine turned upon him and destroyed him.

The hunter and I were between the fire-hole and the two leaders, and a warrior with a drawn knife squatted at the head of each of us. Le Borgne without rising said:

"Take the hide from their feet. If I give the word cut their throats. White men, you are brought here to tell us something. If you are not very careful you will die where you are. Let the White Mandan tell us where are the three men who were in a cave with the white men."

Recalling Balise's words, I found them good and told the same story, saying:

"Three men went out of the cave, leaving three to watch us. After a time they sat in the mouth of the cave and told each other it was a medicine place. They were afraid of the medicine. Then a woman passed, singing. She was traveling to the House of the Infants. One man said she was the woman of Long Lance. Another said Broken Bow would not take her into his lodge as her sister had given him no children, only a little girl that died.

"They talked about other things. One man, Big Kettle, began to say that it was a bad place to be in. He said that it was a resting-place for Mahopamiis, the evil old-woman spirit who chokes little children to death. Another said it was *mapoksaati*,* and that it was often half-filled with snakes and a very bad place for the Minnetarees to stay in. So they talked and were more afraid, and at last Big Kettle said, 'Let us go outside and wait for our brothers.'

"They came and looked at our wrists and feet and saw we were tightly tied. Then they went out, leaving the rifles piled on a robe. Then my friend, the big hunter, got his hands loose. He untied me and the Frenchman. We left the cave together, taking our rifles, which the Minnetarees had left. We saw nothing of the men outside.

"The Frenchman said we must find the horses and ride for the Missouri and follow it down to the new post near the Arikara villages. I said that the men might come back and catch us while we were getting the horses and that I would travel afoot. The hunter went with me. We hid among the rocks that night and then started for this village.

"We met the Frenchman, and he said he had been to the village and that it would be safe for us to come here. Then when I was not looking he struck me on the head with his gun. When I opened my eyes the hunter and I were tied.

"They brought us to the eagle-medicine lodge and spoiled it by keeping us there until tonight. Only hunters and their friends can enter an eagle lodge. We were not hunters, nor their friends."

This was bad hearing for the Minnetarees, and their eyes turned on Le Borgne. Even a despot may be ousted if in addition to violating the rights of his people he meddles with their superstitious beliefs. Le Borgne was quick to speak, and fiercely commanded:

"Stick to one path, white man. White men do not know about red medicine. The eagle lodge is stronger because the Big Knives were tied up there."

"Black Deer forgot and lost his hands," I said.

The uneasy stirring of the warriors became audible. Le Borgne was a masterful man and a brute, but he never could make a red mind believe that a strong medicine can be flouted or its home used for a common purpose without some one paying a heavy price. Tenskwatawa realized the delicacy of the situation and endeavored to divert the general thought by harshly accusing—

"Our white friend says you two men got free and left him tied in the cave."

"He lies. He left the cave with us," I promptly replied.

Tenskwatawa stared thoughtfully at the opening over the fire-hole and carelessly asked—

"After leaving the cave you did not return and harm the Minnetarees?"

I knew he was laying a trap; his simulated indifference, in sharp contrast with Le Borgne's eagerness in leaning forward to hear my reply, told me that much. With all my assurance I retorted:

"The Minnetarees were not there when

*A snake house.

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we left. They went out after the singing woman passed. We did not see them again. We could not have hurt them. Who says they have been hurt?"

Switching his one eye back to bear on me, Tenskwatawa imperiously gestured for me to be silent. Then, turning to Le Borgne, he quietly said:

"This white man, like all Big Knives, has a very crooked tongue. He can not talk straight."

"A Minnetaree knife can straighten his tongue. It will draw much blood, but the blood is bad. His tongue shall be straightened."

"Oh, them —— shooting stars!" groaned Richardson.

Boldness was the only course to pursue.

"Who are you, Shawnee, to speak of crooked tongues?" I hotly demanded. "You came here and called yourself Medicine Crow and said you were a Yankton Dakota. Was your tongue straight? You are a Shawnee man who has lost his medicine. Among your own people you are pointed out as the man whose medicine turned to water, as the man who lost the fight at Tippecanoe. You did not dare wear your own name when you came to the Mandan country.

"How long since a Shawnee can tell the Minnetarees what they shall do? You come to lead them into trouble. You have made trouble in every tribe you have smoked with. You are a man without a people, just as this lying Frenchman dare not go to his own——"

But Balise had heard enough; he stepped on my face, his foot covering my mouth and all but crushing my nose. I felt the prick of a knife as the Indian squatting at my head made ready to obey his chief's command.

Le Borgne, however, had not planned that we should die just then. Perhaps he did not wish the murder to be committed in his hut, for he was a crafty rascal.

His lips twisted sardonically as he looked from me to the Shawnee. Tenskwatawa was impassive of visage, but I knew my words had disturbed and angered him. The spectators, as one, were watching him, not me.

Le Borgne said:

"Take your foot from his face. You men at the door, bring the white men's weapons here."

Balise stepped back and smiled down at me as if much amused.

The hunter muttered—

"I figger we're in for it now, head over heels."

I knew that the Shawnee's trap was closing on me, but even at that I did not grasp the significance of Le Borgne's order. I could not yet feel the jaws of the trap pinch, and I was convinced that my talk to the Shawnee had pleased Le Borgne. On more than one occasion the chief had shown himself to be jealous of Tenskwatawa's wont to take the privilege of issuing orders. And yet it was the Shawnee who had brought the matter to a climax, even though I was unprepared for the next development.

A warrior came from the door and placed before Le Borgne the weapons taken from Richardson and me after Balise had led us into the ambush. Still I could not perceive the trap. The hunter understood, for I heard him groan:

"Lawdy! But now we catch it!"

PERHAPS the blow on my head had befuddled my wits, or possibly I am overassuming in believing myself to possess an average mind. I only know that I could detect nothing new to fear when Le Borgne stood up, threw off his robe and held my weapons in one hand while with the other he shook his war-club at me and thundered—

"These were taken from one of the white men?"

The warrior who had brought them forward replied—

"They were taken from the White Mandan."

Le Borgne shook the rifle and asked—

"This is the gun of the White Mandan?"

"It is," I carelessly answered.

He dropped the rifle, and with a widening of his ghastly grin held up the knife and asked—

"This is the knife of the White Mandan?"

Then indeed did I feel the jaws of the trap. The realization of how simply I had been convicted sickened me physically. I could only marvel at our stupidity in retaining the knives.

"It is not," I said, striving to speak with unconcern.

"Whose knife is it? Where did you get it?"

"I never wore it. I do not know the

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owner. The Frenchman must have put it with my rifle after he knocked me down."

Le Borgne tossed the sheathed blade to the semicircle of warriors and said—

"Tell me who carried that knife before the white man got it."

Almost at once an old man replied—

"Big Kettle carried that knife."

Le Borgne picked up the second knife and said:

"This was taken from the hunter. Who can tell who carried it before the hunter got it?"

And again the identification was prompt. A man called back—

"Swift Horse carried this knife."

Le Borgne drew a deep breath and in a rumbling voice continued:

"Big Kettle and Swift Horse are two of the three men who can not be found. How did these white men get their knives? Can our white friend tell us?"

"—— his black soul!" grated Richardson.

Balise advanced a few steps and replied:

"After I met the White Mandan and the white hunter and was leading them to where the Minnetarees could catch them, the White Mandan told me he saw three men traveling to the cave. He said he followed them and watched them, he and the hunter. He said they crept up to the cave and found the three Minnetarees asleep. He said he shot one with his rifle, and the hunter ran in and killed the other two. He told me they hid the bodies in the back of the cave in a deep hole between the rocks."

He stepped back, and Richardson and I became the target for a concentrated, savage gaze. Tenskwatawa calmly inquired—

"Can the white man's crooked tongue straighten that out?"

"This Frenchman is a liar," I insisted. "Are the Minnetarees children that they will believe such words? Is there a man here who believes the three guards went to the cave and, after finding their prisoners gone, *went to sleep?*"

"Touched!" softly exclaimed Balise.

The suggestion that the guards had taken a nap after losing their prisoners was too preposterous for belief; but Balise easily explained:

"Those were the White Mandan's words. I did not believe them. If he and the hunter killed them they shot them down. The truth will be found in the back of the cave. If the men are there they were killed by these two men."

"We shall know if they are there when my men come back," boomed Le Borgne's deep voice. "Let the white men sit up. Untie their hands. Let the meat be taken from the kettles. We will eat while waiting for the men to come back from the hole in the rocks."

The warriors were hungry for the feast, and as no women were present to serve them they lost no time in filing by the kettles and helping themselves to the boiled buffalo meat, or dried meat, as well as boiled corn and beans, and the roots of a plant, the size of a very small potato and resembling parsnips in taste. Sitting erect, the hunter and I looked about in vain to find a friend. It was a secret meeting of Le Borgne's most powerful adherents.

While the Indians were crowding around the kettles Balise came and stood by us and pleasantly asked—

"How is the appetite, *messieurs?*"

"Good," I told him. "Why does Le Fou keep apart and so quiet? Has he regained his wits?"

Balise chuckled in keen enjoyment and explained:

"You will laugh also. It will be a whimsical thought for you two to take with you. I have told the Minnetarees that I have stolen his medicine. I am to prove my words this night. He will remain a *mahopa* man—so long as he lives—but without his medicine he will be a nuisance.

"The Shawnee has been chagrined ever since his pet crow was killed. The Shawnee does me the honor to appreciate my ability. Le Fou's sun has sunk."

"Where is Red Shield?"

"He knows he is defeated. He has gone to his village. He believes you and the hunter ran away. *Messieurs*, I advise you to eat hearty, for when the men return and say they have found the dead guards it may be impossible for the Shawnee to keep you alive as hostages for Lisa's withdrawal."

"Your heart is black, Balise. You've lived evilly so long you can't help doing as you do. But a balance is always struck. The longer you live the heavier the balance against you."

He laughed at me and reminded me—

"I told you you would pay dear for the small encounter in Shahaka's village."

"A shooting star with your name told me

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I'm going to wipe you out, Balise," said Richardson.

He called the hunter an overgrown fool and walked away. Le Fou left his robe back of the medicine log and came toward us. Now he was the half-wit of the keelboat, moving furtively and with his head bowed, the long, lusterless hair falling down the sides of his thin face. Whatever Balise had told Le Borgne and the Shawnee had visibly depressed him. As he slunk by me I remarked—

"You seem to be in low spirits, Le Fou."

"You act like you was mighty good and scared," gibed the hunter.

"*M'sieur*, I have no words," he weakly replied. "Perhaps after tonight— Yet I am a *mahopa* man. No one dare touch me."

"Except Balise," I reminded. "He struck you, and they tied him up. Now he is a free man and walks with his head held high."

The fellow uneasily jerked his head about and stared at the Frenchman, who was talking with Tenskwatawa, then whispered to me:

"M'sieur Balise may go away on a long journey. Then I will be the biggest man in this village. He may start on his journey very soon." He touched the death's head on his chest and grimaced malevolently. Then he was muttering to himself and walking slowly to the kettles, his head wagging from side to side.

Richardson whispered to me—

"I wish you'd sent word for Mr. Manuel to hustle up here."

I had been wishing the same thing ever since we were laid by the heels at the fort. It was monstrous that we two had been taken in by such an open strategem. It seemed incredible that, with the traders scared out of the village and with so much in our favor, we should find all the conditions reversed in so short a time. Here was Tenskwatawa back in Hidatsa, his influence over the Blind stronger than ever. After all his ups and downs the Frenchman was in the saddle again and shrewdly playing for the good-will of the Shawnee. The American flag had been hauled down, and Red Shield was returned to his village.

It was torture to remember my exultation when Tenskwatawa took to horse and rode away. But what was bitterest of all was to realize how I had taken poor Richardson with me when I walked into the silly trap.

I MOODILY watched the men about the kettles. Le Fou had passed Balise as if not seeing him. The witless one crowded between two warriors, who stepped back and gave him precedence, and he seemed to be hesitating in making a choice. Balise rudely elbowed him aside and dished meat and corn on to a platter. Le Fou addressed him and waved his hands wildly and bowed low as he talked. Warriors passed between them and us for a bit and blocked our view.

Balise punctuated some remarks by pointing to Le Borgne. Le Fou turned his head and glanced at the chief and seemed to shrink within himself. I decided that the Frenchman had uttered some horrible prophecy which frightened the half-wit. Then the group thinned out, and the two white men were passing back to their former positions. Balise passed behind us to take a seat among the warriors.

Le Fou paused in front of us and was much more confident in his bearing. He held his platter in one hand so that he might gesture dramatically, and in a voice of suppressed excitement he confided to us:

"The pig lies! He has told them I have lost my medicine. Ho! Ho! Tonight Le Fou will show them who is the master. A few nights ago I met the Master of Life in a dream, and a name was spoken. Le Fou has not told that name, but wait and listen. Oh, it is all very droll, *m'sieur* the *bourgeois;* very droll."

With a grimace he returned to his robe, his bandy legs threatening to begin an eccentric dance at every step, his sly eyes once more staring impudently at the warriors he passed.

Le Borgne and the Shawnee were the last to visit the kettles. After they had leisurely walked back to the medicine log and all were about to begin eating Tenskwatawa attracted general attention by remaining erect as if to speak. He deposited his platter on the ground and glided rapidly toward the door. All eyes were upon him. Le Borgne held a hunk of meat half-raised to his cruel mouth and stared in amazement at his guest. It was astounding that Tenskwatawa should leave the secret gathering without a word of explanation.

But his objective was the kettles, not the

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door; and he busied himself with placing food on two platters. His own platter was steaming by the medicine log, and Le Borgne was puzzled to fathom the purpose of his guest.

Bearing the two platters, the Shawnee came to us and gave a platter to the hunter and one to me and gravely said:

"Whether men are to live or die they should eat. You two are so small no one saw that you had no meat. Here is food."

And with a haughty step he resumed his place beside the chief.

I glanced at Balise and read chagrin in his face. He was wishing he had remembered to serve us with food. He caught my gaze and called out to me—

"A thousand pardons, *messieurs;* but I had other matters on my mind."

Le Fou heard him, and a wide grin split his thin face as he leaned forward to watch every move his former patron made. Suddenly he stood up and asked me in French:

"Will *m'sieur* the *bourgeois* (I was always "*bourgeois*" to the poor ——, as that had been my rank when he deserted the boat) interpret for me to the savages? The pig will not give my words straight."

"If they will let me speak I will interpret for you," I answered.

He swung his wild gaze over the assemblage, halting it a moment to rest on the sneering visage of Balise, and then threw back his head, closed his eyes and in a high cracked voice sang:

"Trois canards s'en vont baignans,
Ye, ye mentl
Le fils du roi s'en va chassant,
Tous du long de la rivière,
Légèrement, ma bergère;
Légèrement, ye mentl"

This river ditty had become an incantation in red ears. The warriors watched him closely, their gaze uneasy. If they had been led to believe that the *mahopa* man had lost his weird power they were now believing that that power had been restored. I did not interpret the verse.

He began a wild harangue, pausing only when I lifted a hand. I repeated his words to Le Borgne and the Shawnee, addressing them nobly in the Minnetaree mode of expression. He told them that an evil voice had been lying about him, that it was the voice of Mahopamiis, the wicked old woman spirit, speaking through the mouth of her son, Balise. This was largely original with me as Le Fou knew nothing of their superstitions.

Those who believed the words of the Frenchman would be very sorry. The Frenchman could not steal the *mahopa* man's medicine. He could only work mischief with his lying tongue. As to the Frenchman's foolish boast that he would prove his claims that very night, the *mahopa* man laughed at him and asked the Minnetarees to wait until they had examined his proofs.

Balise, who had started to eat, sprang to his feet as Le Fou sat down and made reply. Among other things he said:

"I do not have to talk through the mouth of a Big Knife. The *mahopa* man says I have talked with a crooked tongue. I have spoken what was put into my head to say. The Master of Life told me what to say.

"I have been tied up with Minnetaree cords. The Master of Life came to me and told me to be brave, that the Minnetarees would see the truth and let me go. I escaped after the white men left me alone in the cave. I came here at once and spoke with a straight tongue.

"Your mighty chief, the Blind, and his great friend, saw my heart was clean. They knew I was not an enemy of the Minnetarees. I stand here tonight with no rawhide about my feet. That man there is a *mahopa* man, but who shall say the Master of Life will let him work with big medicine?"

Le Fou grimaced in derision and continued bolting his food. All the others in the big hut had stopped eating.

Balise paused and stared at Le Fou with widened gaze. It seemed several minutes that he stood thus, and I began to think that he suddenly had lost his power of speech. Then he was speaking again:

"A man who works with big medicine must not make mistakes. He must not let his medicine run away; for if he does that, the medicine may return and crawl up behind him and send him to the Village of the Dead.

"Where is his medicine tonight? Does it do as he tells it, or is it crawling around this lodge, hunting for some one to make into a ghost?" This query sent a spasm of fear through the half-circle of warriors.

"A man is *mahopa* when he is all things a Minnetaree is not. He is so different from other men that when he strikes a warrior

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that warrior turns away and does not look at him. When he enters a lodge and abuses a woman he is not hurt. He is not harmed because his head has been touched by Itsikamahidis. No man can take his life. But who shall say that the First Made can not take away the life he has given?

"The man is *mahopa;* but Itsikamahidis can send him to the Village of the Dead when he will. And will the First Made let even a *mahopa* man live on and on when he can not keep his medicine from growing weak or running away?

"The *mahopa* man has dreamed and has heard a name. I have dreamed and have seen the *mahopa* man among ghosts. We will wait and see which dream is true, and which is a lie sent by evil spirits."

With that he seated himself and began eating; eating rapidly and wolfing his food. The Indians were divided in their thoughts, as told by their worried eyes switching from one to the other of the two Frenchmen. Balise's speech would have made by far the stronger appeal had not Le Fou been a *mahopa* man. I doubt, on the other hand, if there was a red man in the hut who did not believe that Le Fou was incapable of controlling his medicine. The death of the Shawnee's tame crow had convinced them of that.

Le Fou cleaned his platter some minutes before Balise finished eating. When Balise pushed the dish from him and fumbled for his pipe Le Fou threw back his head and began to laugh. It was horrible to observe his ghastly mirth. Tears streamed down his sallow cheeks, and he held his hands to his side.

Tenskwatawa and Le Borgne, seated near him, moved about uneasily. Neither would have winced a hair when confronted with sure death resulting from natural conditions. But this spectacle was too uncanny even for their iron nerves, and they shrank away from Le Fou's unnatural deportment.

Finally Le Fou managed to speak, and his voice screamed as he taunted:

"You always called me Le Fou. You gave me that name in the town of Balise. Pig from Balise, it is you will be remembered as Le Fou! You thought to steal my medicine! Ho! Ho! Pig, you are a dead man even now!"

Balise waited until the paroxysm of awful mirth had subsided. Then he retorted:

"You poor fool! It is you who are dying. I changed the platters when I told you the chief was signaling to you. You got the one you fixed for me when you waved your hands over the meat and thought I did not know what you were doing. Le Fou, you have eaten arsenic!"

If what had gone before was revolting then what next happened defies description. It is impossible for me to picture the awful tragedy of that scene, and perhaps it is better so. I only remember the terrible wailing cry of Le Fou as he pressed both hands across his stomach and staggered to his feet, his eyes bulging with horror or pain. I can never forget his shrill, hopeless voice as he screamed:

"I am *mahopa*, I tell you! I am a *mahopa* man. I can not be killed! Pig of the devil, you lie! Your whole life is a lie! My hand was not off my platter! My eyes——"

His speech was interrupted by a convulsive spell of strident laughter. Not merely the laughter of the hysterical, but rather a piling up of cachinnatory sounds that finally culminated in an explosive outburst.

Then he was writhing on his robe. Then he was still, forever done with his mad whims, finished with his hard lot; and doomed to a nameless resting-place until the Great Balance is struck, and all the unfortunate and misguided have their miseries adjusted.

CHAPTER XII

"MR. MANUEL"

TENSKWATAWA and Le Borgne must have known the truth about the murder. The rank and file of the Minnetarees in the big hut simply knew that the *mahopa* man was dead and believed that Balise had destroyed him after first stealing his medicine; or, as they would have expressed it, Le Fou was killed by his own medicine. Le Borgne was quick to perceive that Balise had become a man of much importance; and he grinned as he stared at the Frenchman, but there was distrust in his one eye.

Fearfully jealous of his own power among the Indians, he already was suspecting Balise of aspiring to leadership. It had been the same ever since he joined hands with the Shawnee, a sharp watchfulness that the Prophet did not usurp any of a chief's prerogatives. Now he was wondering if

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the white mystery man would give him any trouble. At least Le Fou had enjoyed an immunity which never could protect his slayer; Balise was not *mahopa*.

After the excitement caused by Le Fou's tragic passing-out had subsided, Le Borgne gave orders for two of the men to carry the dead man from the lodge. They disliked to touch the body, but the somber eye of their leader was compelling. Le Borgne then rose and gravely said:

"We have a strong medicine working for us. We have seen a *mahopa* man die, and no man touched him. The white medicine man will be washed red and live with us and turn his medicine against our enemies. Already his medicine has brought two white men to us with their feet tied. The Minnetarees will receive pipes from many tribes. Can our new brother kill the white men by talking to them and telling them to die?"

Balise, speaking for the first time since Le Fou expired, rose and haughtily boasted—

"He can kill them by his talk."

"You're a liar!" shouted Richardson. "You used poison, the same as Blackbird, chief of the Omahas, did. You have no medicine."

Balise bent an evil look on the hunter and in English told him—

"*M'sieur* will yet find death in his platter if the savages do not attend to him very soon."

To the chief he said:

"It is not good to waste a strong medicine on men who are tied like a fat dog waiting to go into the kettle. My medicine tells me three dead men have been found in a cave. The Minnetarees do not need a medicine to kill those who killed their brothers."

Doubtless he shrewdly had guessed that a warrior just arrived and standing inside the door was one of those sent to examine the hole in the rocks, where the three dead guards had been thrown. And it was very possible that he knew the men sent to ascertain the truth and was recognizing the newcomer.

Le Borgne motioned for the man to advance, and commanded—

"Tell us what you have found."

"Three Minnetarees dead and hidden in a hole. One was shot with a gun; one died by a knife, and one had no marks but died when his neck broke."

Exclamations of rage greeted this announcement, and ferocious glances were darted at us. It was like being hemmed in by a starved wolf-pack. Richardson weakened and muttered—

"I begin to feel like a ghost already, Mandan Ramsay."

Tenskwatawa did not appear to be sharing Le Borgne's murderous hate. So far as his impassive face hinted at any emotion I believed he was sorry that the messenger's talk was as it was. And this was not because of any sympathy for us. He was fearing that his plans would be spoiled by our dying prematurely. He harshly called out—

"Are the dead men here?"

"They will be brought here when it is day. Spotted Bull rode fast to bring his talk," replied the messenger.

"The Bull has done well. Let him find a big platter and eat," rumbled Le Borgne.

Then he swept his keen eye over the assemblage and asked—

"What shall we do with two white men who kill three of our brothers?"

Several men were eager to answer but gave way for a warrior well along in years, whose broad shoulders and deep chest carried the scars of old wounds. This fellow took it upon himself to answer for all, saying:

"These men must die very quick. The ghost of the *mahopa* man is waiting for them, let them be knocked in the head and cut up."

Grunts of approval greeted this speech; and it did seem as if our hours were few. But Tenskwatawa now rose and folded his arms and stared at the last speaker until the man seemed to be confused and averted his eyes.

Then the Shawnee's deep, vibrating voice began molding his audience into a different frame of mind. With rare eloquence he rehearsed the causes—from the red point of view—which had led up to the war between America and Great Britian. In a rush of words he refreshed their recollections as to the part his illustrious brother had played in conspiring to drive all white men beyond the Mississippi. He took them into his confidence and frankly admitted his presence in the village was to gain more allies for the red army Tecumseh was now leading.

He painted a wonderful future for the red race, once the Big Knives were pushed

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back beyond the Mississippi or exterminated. They forgot that already they were becoming dependent upon the traders for weapons, better seeds and cloth. His imagination held them in thrall. He played upon their racial pride, recalling their man strength in ancient days but never giving them time to remember that warriors wiped out by smallpox could not be restored.

He swept them on with him as his word-pictures portrayed the ideal existence; but never a word about the dread bite of Winter nor the necessity of dragging a Summer's fuel from the Missouri during the Spring flood, nor the need of the Autumnal migration to the timber hills, and the bitter fight for life through the white months. All was to be indolence and ease and endless feasting, a never ending series of victories over all enemies and an unfailing game supply at the very doors of their huts. And when he had drawn them under the influence of his persuasive tongue he began to undermine their mad lust to slaughter us without having first extricated a profit from our forfeited lives.

"You do not throw away the skin of the wolf when you kill one," he thundered. "You use it for a robe or give it to your woman. If you caught a wolf in a deep hole and could have many things if you kept him alive for a time you would not kill him with a club. You would keep him in the deep hole and feed him as long as the good things came to you. You would not kill him until he was worthless to you.

"Now you have two wolves tied fast in this hut. If you kill them now they are worth nothing to you. *Duma** if you keep them alive for a time you will win a big fight from the Big Knives without striking a blow or losing a warrior. These men must die; but there are many days ahead of you in which to kill them.

"Near the Arikara villages is a new trading-post. Many hunters are there, all Big Knives, all hungry to cheat the red man. We can drive them out by fighting; but if you fight them many of your women will go among the hills in the night to wail about their dead. It is better if they go away without making a fight.

"The Master of Life sends me to tell the Minnetarees not to throw away their lives. The Master of Life has told me to send a talk to Lisa, the leader of the Big Knives, and tell him to leave his post and go down the river. And to tell him that the White Mandan, who is like a son to him, will die if the trader does not leave the post. No one but the Master of Life knows what Lisa will do when he hears that talk; but it hurts us none to send the talk to him.

"If three sleeps after he has heard the talk he is at the post you can send one scalp and the hunter's rifle. Then if he does not go away you can send the White Mandan's scalp.

"*Duma* you would be like foolish men to kill a wolf you have tied fast if you think the wolf alive can bring you a good trade. Keep these men alive and feed them well; let no strong medicine *spoil their meat.*

"If Lisa stays, kill them. If he goes away, wait until he has passed below the last Arikara village, and then kill them if you wish. With the voice of Tenskwatawa, who came to you as Medicine Crow, and who is the brother of the mighty Tecumseh, the Master of Life makes this talk to you."

Le Borgne never had relished the Shawnee's influence over the men. He resented it as a trespass on his own power. Given his choice between exterminating all Americans west of the Mississippi and retaining his standing as principal chief of the Minnetarees, he would have elected to continue in supreme power over the three villages. On the other hand his greed for the white man's goods might have induced him to trade our lives for many guns and much cloth had it not been for appearing to be following the Shawnee's lead. Unlike many a less important chief he did not place the life of a follower ahead of personal gain.

No sooner had Tenskwatawa seated himself than Le Borgne was on his feet, thudding the head of his big war-club on the ground and hoarsely proclaiming:

"The Blind is your chief. He has led you against the Cheyennes and against the Sioux. He has taught you how to whip the Assiniboins and how to make the Arikaras run. He kills many buffaloes, while other chiefs can not find enough meat to eat. When he sends a talk to a Mandan village all ears are open to hear it. The Arikaras run into their villages when they hear his name.

"Now three of his warriors are dead, and the two Big Knives who killed them are here. Why should the Minnetarees wait for the trader Lisa to go down the river?

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"Who are the Big Knives that we should be afraid of them? Shahaka the Mandan spoke with a crooked tongue when he said there were many of them. There are very few. Tenskwatawa has told us many times that the big white chief over the big water will whip them to their lodges and make them work like women. Why should not these two Big Knives die tonight?"

The man standing at my head gave a loud whoop and raised his knife over me.

"Stop!" thundered Le Borgne. "A *mahopa* man has died in this lodge. If other men die here there will be too many ghosts waiting until the sun has gone down four times before they go away to the Village of the Dead. Let no man touch them until Le Borgne calls the man's name and gives the word."

"Mandan Ramsay, that was a —— tight squeeze for you," gasped the hunter.

TENSKWATAWA bounded to his feet, faced the chief and harshly reminded him of the bargain made between them when we were first captured. He demanded to know whether that talk meant nothing.

Le Borgne, standing in considerable awe of the Shawnee even while defying him, replied:

"It was a good talk and sounded strong to the Blind; but my warriors had not been killed when we made it. The Blind is chief of the Minnetarees. What he says shall be done. These men will be taken outside and struck on the head."

With great dignity Tenskwatawa rose and threw his long robe over his shoulders and strode to the door. Le Borgne grinned after him, but the one eye seemed to be lacking much of its fire. Already he was regretting the departure of the Shawnee; and I believe that only pride, and the fear lest his men would misinterpret his surrender, prevented him from retracting and agreeing to follow the original program of keeping us alive for a few days.

I saw the chief's big hand close convulsively around the knob of the club. I saw him lean forward and watch intently as the Shawnee reached the door. And I verily believe that, had Tenskwatawa turned and glanced back and given an inch toward reconciliation, the chief would have patched up their differences. But Tenskwatawa kicked the rawhide door open and stepped out into the night and out of my life.

Le Borgne was quick to see that his warriors too were uneasy over the Shawnee's precipitate departure. Some of the glamour of the prophet still clung to him despite his military error of the year before. He had failed where his fighting brother might have won, but his failure was so monumental as to win him respect from many a red man.

The defeat at Tippecanoe, reckoned by casualties, was no more than any prominent war chief might sustain in any one of the innumerable intertribal fights. It was his loss of standing, his irreparable loss as a prophet, that centered the attention of the red world on him. He had come as a messiah and had been whipped. Only physical victories counted with the upper tribes; nor could they understand why One should be worshiped Whose Son had been crucified.

However, now that the first sting of defeat had ceased to smart, the former greatness of the Shawnee commanded respect. Tippecanoe was a year old, and no new prophet had come to take Tenskwatawa's place. There was the growing hope in many a savage mind that the Shawnee had renewed his medicine and would again prove himself to be very strong.

This admiration for the Shawnee was natural for the Minnetarees to entertain, inasmuch as they felt only fear when looking on Le Borgne. They followed him and obeyed him because of his readiness in swinging his terrible club.

It may be that Le Borgne regretted this break with the Shawnee more than did any of his followers. Certainly he must have built many a high ambition upon the Shawnee's cooperation.

But all that was in the dust, now that the rawhide door had closed upon the man. Vanished was Tenskwatawa's comprehensive scheme for linking Sioux, Minnetarees, Mandans and Arikaras to one cause. Le Borgne lacked the finesse to carry out such a broad program. Astute as he was, he could not control his beastly rage when opposed in any wish.

He stood and drew his superb figure to its full height, and his one eye blazed with anger as he stared at the closed door. To the savages he cried out:

"Are the Minnetarees children that they must be led by a Shawnee? Many Winters

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have come and gone since the Minnetarees have held up their heads. You have crawled into the lodges of the Arikaras and brought back their scalps long before you saw Tenskwatawa. You have stood in the moonlight and shouted at a Sioux village and have brought back many horses before the Shawnee man came to us.

"He brought a *mahopa* man with him whose medicine ran away from him. Now we have the man who was strong enough to steal that medicine. He does not go away with the Shawnee. He will live with us and his medicine will help us.

"The Shawnee would keep death away from the two white men. The Blind says death must come to them who kill his warriors. Three dead men in a hole are waiting to be covered. These white men must die. Their ghosts will wait four days around the spot where they die. Let them be taken from this lodge to the end of the village."

Now he had his men thoroughly in accord with him. Balise laughed silently as he watched our faces.

"*Messieurs*," he mocked, "you begin to feel M'sieur Death biting you. The man from Balise keeps his word. After the affair in Shahaka's town he said only blood could wipe out the insult M'sieur Ramsay put upon him."

He paused; then with a swift transition to open ferocity he laid bare his cruel heart by snarling—

"I would see all North America sink into —— before I would let you off from paying the full price."

The warriors were standing, waiting only for him to finish his talk before dragging us outside and cracking us over the head with club or hatchet. In desperation I cried out:

"At least, Balise, save the hunter. You fought with me, not with Richardson. Remember, he saved your life at the risk of his own."

"If he saves me I'll kill him!" roared Richardson, chewing his lips until blood speckled his tangled beard.

With a little outthrowing of his hands Balise replied:

"Alas! M'sieur Ramsay sees it is impossible. The big hunter knows too much. He has too long a tongue. If America should win the war there would be no place for Balise to hide in.

"And the hunter makes his death doubly necessary by promising me violence. It is his misfortune that the hunter came with *m'sieur* to this village. Death grinned over his shoulder when he was selected for the journey."

He turned away and walked along the wall to the door.

Le Borgne named several warriors, and they advanced to drag us out.

THEN Mr. Manuel entered! He came alone. There was no fear in his bearing; no surprize in his face. He was inside the door as hands gripped my feet and shoulders. I was allowed to drop to the ground as the men saw him.

He stood still for a few moments until all eyes had found him. Then he leisurely advanced toward the astounded chief, bowing pleasantly and calling different warriors by name, pausing to ask this stupefied man about his family, and that dazed man how fared the hunting.

Le Borgne appeared to be incapable of motion or speech. He could not have been more taken aback had the medicine log stood on end and addressed him. With only a side glance at us Mr. Manuel addressed the chief, saying:

"Forty American riflemen wait for me outside the village. (He had less than a dozen.) Red Shield and his friends are around this lodge. I must go back to them very soon, or they will come to find me.

"They tell me you have grown very large pumpkins from the seeds I gave you. That is good. They say you will go Snake River very soon for the Winter and will need traps. I come to say I will lend traps to those men who have none. I have let many red men take traps for a season and taken no pay. I have not been cheated yet. I do not believe the Minnetarees will be the first to keep my traps.

"There is another thing I come to talk about. Some young Minnetarees stole my horses from my new fort. The young men probably thought they were Arikara horses. They must be returned.

"I find my heart heavy to see an enemy flag over this lodge. We will talk about that later."

Le Borgne by this time had recovered from his astonishment and was coldly saying:

"The white trader's eyes are very sharp.

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He sees like the great war-eagle that flies above the sun and can see a dead rat on an eagle-trap. But a cloud must be before the trader's eyes. He does not see two white men ready for death for killing three Minnetaree men."

"The trader saw his men when he opened the door," quietly answered Mr. Manuel. "They have their feet tied, but they are not hurt. There is no hurry about setting them free——"

"We killed men who held us tied up in a cave, *bourgeois*," broke in the hunter.

"They say they killed men who held them prisoners," said Mr. Manuel. "White men and red men are like that—they want to be free. The bodies of the dead shall be covered.

"I brought my riflemen up the river in a big canoe. We brought many gifts. The dead shall be covered so their ghosts will go away. But never again will I cover the bodies of the men who make my men prisoners. I do it this time because they say a strange Indian has been here and has cast a spell over some of the Minnetarees.

"I have taken an Arikara pipe to the Sioux. It was smoked. I have brought a Sioux pipe to the Mandans, and it has been smoked. The Sioux are now free to fight one tribe—the Minnetarees."

He paused to allow the full force of this threat to be felt, and the effect was immediate. The Minnetarees were very brave men, but if the powerful Sioux nation found all war paths closed except one leading to the three Minnetaree villages, then the fate of that people was a foregone conclusion. Even the savage face of Le Borgne twitched uneasily.

Mr. Manuel drew from inside of his coat a long peace calumet, decorated intricately with feathers of various birds, each bit of adornment possessing a symbolic meaning and rendering the pipe one of the most sacred objects known to the American red men.

That the Sioux should send the pipe, instead of receiving it, puffed the Blind's pride mightily. He had been honored by a people who had an inexhaustible supply of fighting-men. When the different grand divisions of the Dakota waged a common war no red foe could stand against them. The reaction from fear to assurance robbed the Minnetarees of their stoicism; they stared at the pipe and smiled at each other.

Mr. Manuel raised the pipe above his head and sharply commanded—

"Now, Le Borgne, have my men set free before my arm gets tired and breaks this peace pipe of the Sioux and I return to tell my riflemen and Red Shield's warriors that you hold the two white men prisoners."

"The white men have killed three Minnetarees—" sullenly began Le Borgne.

"My riflemen shoot very fast and straight. My arm grows weak. The pipe will soon fall and break. The Sioux will be told that the Minnetarees refused the pipe so they could club two white men to death."

His arm wavered and his fingers began to open. If the pipe was not accepted a red horde of fighting men would sweep over the three villages. Le Borgne surrendered. He harshly commanded—

"Let the white men go."

Richardson and I once more stood erect, kicking our heels to restore the circulation. Mr. Manuel kept his back to us and continued:

"There are rifles that belong to these men. They must be given back."

"The rifles are in a medicine lodge," grumbled Le Borgne. "They shall be given back when it is day."

"There are twenty-six horses stolen from my post."

This was too much for the chief to swallow without a struggle; and he angrily retorted:

"There are three horses here. My young men brought them in. The Mandans have the rest of the trader's horses. Three horses will be brought in when it is day."

Richardson shattered their dialog by shouting:

"*Bourgeois!* The Frenchman! Don't let him git away!"

Balise was slipping through the door.

"Stay, Mr. Manuel! We'll get him!" I cried, running unevenly to the door.

Richardson snatched the big war-club from Le Borgne's hand and raced after me. I yelled a warning for Red Shield's men to seize the Frenchman, but it was dark in the lane and the Indians waiting there had only seen a figure leave the lodge. A fair moon was sailing the heavens and lighting the open country, but between the lodges the night was very obscure.

"Red Shield is on the other side of the lodge with some of his men," a warrior told

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me. "What man does the White Mandan ask us to chase?"

"He went this way, Mandan Ramsay! He's making for the hoss-herd!" cried Richardson.

I heard men approaching from the opposite direction. They were walking and leading some horses. I called out to them in Minnetaree to hasten and bring two horses. Red Shield was the first man to reach me.

"A man runs away who must die," I explained. "Give me the horses. Le Borgne receives the Sioux pipe. Go inside and stand with the trader."

He did not need to be told that his place was with Mr. Manuel. He provided us with two war-horses and called on his men to follow him inside the big lodge.

I mounted and led the second animal, following the hunter and directed by his stentorian shouts. I overtook him on the edge of the village. With a yelp of delight he flung himself into the saddle and pointed to the north, where a dark figure was scudding across a tilled patch of ground.

Taking care not to fall into any of the numerous vegetable cellars, we worked clear of the village and kicked our mounts into a gallop. I left it to the hunter's keen eyes to maintain the pursuit, my own mind being so upset that my head whirled.

Mr. Manuel had arrived in time! I could scarcely believe it. Alone he had confronted the hostile chief and had conquered him without raising his voice. Black Deer had not had time to deliver my talk and have the *bourgeois* on the scene. Later I learned that I was correct in accepting the only possible conclusion; namely, that Mr. Manuel had set out on the heels of his message to me, coming by boat.

"We're getting closer!" joyously yelled the hunter.

I became objective long enough to warn:

"Then watch sharp! His horse hasn't gone lame. He's up to some trick."

My suspicion was confirmed by a spurt of flame, the crack of a rifle, and the singing of a bullet. Richardson urged his horse to greater efforts so he might close in before Balise could reload. But the Frenchman's mount was superior to ours, and he easily held his lead.

We topped a low ridge and saw him plunging down into the narrow valley. His horse seemed to be flying instead of treading the earth, but as we took the descent at a break-neck gallop the fugitive became a strange blue for a few moments. Richardson fairly shrieked in his delight.

"By ——! His nag is down, and no trick about it! Hooray! Now we've got him!"

And he attempted to sing *Les Chevelures*.

Balise was up and finishing the slope on foot, running easily and swiftly. But his speed was nothing compared with that of ours, and he had no cover to hide in. Under the excitement of the chase and the spur of our hate we drove the horses at a headlong pace and left it to their native ability to keep their feet. Our medicine must have been very strong, else we would have been down at any moment.

I swung in beside the hunter. I heard him swear with rage as I drew ahead of him.

We struck the bottom of the little valley and beheld the Frenchman seated on a rock. He had turned at bay, knowing that it was useless to flee from us. His rifle cracked, and I was knocked half-around and felt myself slipping from the saddle. I reined in mechanically and took the ground and felt the wind jolted from my chest.

When I regained my breath my left side was curiously numb, and I choked as I breathed. The hunter was afoot and fighting Balise. I managed to prop up my head on my right arm to watch them. If the hunter was disabled or killed, then the Frenchman would have no trouble in counting coup on me. A ten-year-old Minnetaree boy could have done for me.

As the two men maneuvered around I discovered that the struggle was unique for white men. Each had reverted to the fighting usages of the red man. Balise had a long knife and a round shield. The hunter had his war-club.

Richardson puffed and grunted as he swung the club in a terrible circle. I could hear the scrape of the Frenchman's moccasins as he nimbly slipped aside. The hunter fell back a step, then jumped ahead and smashed down his club. With his marvelous litheness Balise evaded the blow and straightened out almost horizontally, the point of the knife ripping a long red seam along the hunter's arm.

"Touched! I count coup!" exulted Balise.

"You'll be counting your toes in—inside a minute," panted Richardson, swinging the club before him to keep the Frenchman off.

"Look out!" I cried as Balise shifted the

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knife to the hand holding the shield and scooped up a handful of soil.

Even as I spoke he hurled the dirt into Richardson's face. Roaring with rage, the hunter charged, the Frenchman giving ground and bending low, ready to spring to close quarters and finish the grim business. The hunter, still winking the dirt from his streaming eyes, struck blindly and missed. The knife all but got him in the side.

"Poke him!" I frantically advised.

The Frenchman, with the shield before him, was ready to close in again. Richardson took my advice, ceased swinging the club and drove the heavy end forward, catching the shield in the center and sending his opponent staggering back. With a triumphant howl he delivered a short-arm blow and knocked the shield aside before Balise had recovered his balance. The next swing of the club brought a sickening sound, much as if a ripe pumpkin had been smashed.

Then the hunter was standing alone and staring down at his feet. I heard him mutter:

"That shooting star meant bad medicine for you, Balise. You'll l'arn after a while."

But Balise was through with earthly lessons. Perhaps he and Le Fou talked it over and discussed their mistakes while the hunter and I rode slowly back to the village, the hunter close beside me to keep me from falling from the saddle.

I was dully wondering if Le Fou had carried his twisted mind among the ghosts, or if the transition had endowed him with normal intelligence, when the sound of shouting reached my ears. I remember hearing men calling out in English and the sound of swift hoofs. Then the world grew as black for me as it had for Balise.

I PURPOSED to write of Mr. Manuel's great service to his country, and I find I have strung together my own personal adventures. Yet his appearance alone in the hut of Le Borgne was a most courageous venture. His celerity in taking over a hopeless situation and his masterful way of substituting life for death is a clear index of the man's quality. The ease with which he robbed Tecumseh of untold thousands of potential fighting-men should picture the man for those who can read between the lines.

Results should permit the reader to reconstruct the endeavors that preceded the rescue. The nature of my efforts has limited my narrative to whatever passed before my observation. The reader has been compelled to keep by my side throughout the long passage of the river; but he is to remember that whenever Mandan Ramsay tried to cook a kettle it was Mr. Manuel who prevented it from boiling over. Where I had one thrilling experience Mr. Manuel filled a day with them.

We left the Minnetarees pledged to the American cause, and Le Borgne, although he may not have realized this fully, well advanced on his path to loss of power and loss of life.

My wound incapacitated me for months for serving as Mr. Manuel's right-hand man; and during the red Autumn and the greater part of the Winter I was restricted to the trading-post and could act only as an observer.

But never was Mr. Manuel so busy. He incessantly planned and worked. It was characteristic of him not to complain or grow discouraged when he beheld the efforts of weeks swept away in a night. With endless patience he maintained his pressure on the Sioux. He would not coax them to the point of swelling their pride, nor did he hesitate to punish when their lust for slaying was turned against him and his men. If his reprisals were prompt, however, he would not permit a situation to develop until a new pact was impossible.

I do not remember that he had serious trouble twice with the same band. And by far the greater number of differences he smoothed out and composed were between red men and red men—tribal fights and intertribal raids in which the white men were not endangered so long as they remained neutral. Lodges from the various tribes were constantly arriving and leaving the post, and hereditary enemies ceased their killings once their lodges were erected on the Missouri Fur Company's holdings.

But the whole red country was in a state of unrest, and murders were often committed within pistol-shot of our stockade. I recall one cloudy, cold day during my convalescence when Arikara hunters arrived at the gate and told us that three of our men trapping above the Big Bend had been murdered by the Sioux. I remember the gloom permeating the post the day after Christmas when Immel and four men went

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to a very large camp of the Sioux near the fort to learn their intentions, and were insolently told that the band refused our friendship and would trade with us if it pleased them, or plunder us if they took that notion.

Mr. Manuel did not beg for their friendship, but instructed the night guards to shoot at anything moving outside the stockade at night. Several dogs were killed in the darkness. Very soon the Sioux mended their behavior and vowed lasting friendship.

A large band of Cheyennes came to the post and were of valuable assistance in hunting buffaloes for robes. The Sioux promptly took a fight to the Cheyennes. At the beginning of the new year the Arikaras got out of hand and killed a Sioux chief, and the Sioux promptly murdered an Arikara woman.

As each of these dangerous situations came up Mr. Manuel patiently repaired the mischief, carried peace tobacco back and forth and prevented a general war. All the Canadian traders had left the Minnetaree and Mandan villages, taking their flags with them. Beyond stealing our horses these two tribes gave us no concern.

I remember the night a Minnetaree hunter pounded on the stockade gate and died when we took him into the fort. He had Sioux arrows through his stomach and breast. That night Sioux arrows were fired through the stockade crevices and were found next morning sticking into the walls of the fort.

Time after time the fort was in an uproar when the Indians staying with us would learn that some of their people had been slain by the Sioux. Or there would be a mad rejoicing when Sioux hair was brought in at the point of a lance.

It must not be supposed that only the Sioux sang and danced *Les Chevelures*. Nor must it be thought that there was any unison in the bloody enterprises of that powerful nation. Small bands were constantly going forth to earn honor and prestige, ready to fall upon any small party of alien red men.

The post paid a toll, but our hunters kept the score even. Louis Archambeau was killed on the opposite side of the river while hauling hay on a sleigh. There were twenty-nine arrows feathering the poor fellow when we picked him up. That night five hundred Sioux surrounded the post but did not attack. That was the most serious menace that we encountered.

Directly on the heels of these raids and killings Mr. Manuel would hunt up the offenders and with only a companion or two ride boldly into the hostile camp or village and demand back stolen horses, or induce them to smoke peace tobacco, or announce that the house trade awaited those who had anything to trade.

It is a wonder that none of the savage bands killed him when they had him at their mercy; and yet, knowing the great influence he exerted over them even in their bloody moments, perhaps I should not wonder. I think he looked upon them as so many children, horribly vicious or eager to suffer any price for a friend—all depending on the mood they happened to be in.

I do know that he firmly believed in their inherent honesty. They could no more resist stealing horses than a small boy can keep away from an early fruit-tree; but in their belief a successful horse-thief was a great man. If they stole our horses, also did they steal from each other. Our goods were inviolate in any village.

And they believed Mr. Manuel when he gave his word. Therein was the key to his influence over them.

But to hold the post was not enough if we would keep the tribes clear of British control and down to the average, normal plane of sporadic fighting. We must trade, else they would believe we were on the defensive and unable to leave the country until the ice left the river in the Spring.

"Be bold. Always be bold," Mr. Manuel was constantly reminding his *engagés*.

So we were bold, and traded as if there were no war between the States and Great Britain, and as if all the tribes were at peace. The incidents I have mentioned were nothing more than they would have figured in had there not been a white man on the Missouri.

Through all the discord and strife Mr. Manuel walked calmly, never losing his confidence and always indefatigable in purpose. He covered with gifts the deaths of little children, he inflicted tongue-lashings on chiefs. He went alone to hostile camps. Out of it all he emerged with the confidence and friendship of the nations such as no white man before him had ever won.

Such is the man whom fellow-traders have traduced at times and accused of

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trickery. If he practised any trickery on white men it was in self-defense. None of the red men ever accused him of deceit.

Up to his death in 1820 he maintained his grip on the upper country. He had ascended and descended the Missouri River thirteen times and by water alone had traveled twenty-six thousand miles. He spent three years of time in the actual work of navigating the Missouri; and out of twelve Winters he passed eight in the Indian country.

History may continue to neglect Manuel Lisa, but to us who lived with him and knew him as "Mr. Manuel" he will remain one of the outstanding figures and dominant forces of the 1812 War—the first of the really great traders, and always a thorough patriot.

THE END

THE SWEAT BATH

by Frank H. Huston

CONTRARY to general belief among the whites, the sweat bath of the plains tribes was not in itself a therapeutic measure. That such an effect was obtained was recognized, but *per se* the bath was a religious rite performed for the purification of soul and body, preparatory to some further act of piety, expiation or ritualistic participation.

Certainly the brave when feeling ill would frequently erect a small lodge and partake of the primitive Turkish bath, but because he believed that his illness resulted from action of some bad spirit, and that this act would propitiate the good spirit and cause him to exorcise the evil powers that were oppressing his body with pains and aches, not because he thought that the bath would cure him; as witness the fact that wounds and fractures were not so treated.

The tribal as well as the military-organization houses were somewhat larger than the individual, the former being under the direct care of the medicine-men. A dry buffalo skull and small mound of earth were placed in front of the entrance, the skin hovel being situated with a certain reference to the other teepees in the camp.

The individual house was less ornate—it was merely a skin or two thrown over a crude frame erected near the bank of a stream if possible. The large ones left an opening at the top that hot stones and water might be passed in, and was covered with an extra piece of hide by the "outside guard."

A pile of stones was heated and placed within the shelter. Stark naked, the devotee took his place within, crouched into as small a compass as he could contrive if the participants were numerous. One of the old men water-pourers, of whom there were only a few in a nation—this being the corresponding degree to that of Knights of the Temple—passed with forked sticks the hot stones to the medicine man within; the latter, like the individual performer, filled his mouth with water and squirted the liquid in a fine mist over the stones. One who has seen a Chinaman sprinkle the ironing with water has seen a realistic re-creation of the manner in which the Indian obtained the requisite moisture and temperature.

The heads of the bathers were held close to the ground in order that they might not inhale the steam, and when a number of odoriferous bodies began to ooze their overpowering characteristic Injun aroma, a darky high jinks was perfume of Araby in comparison. It should be remembered that the smell of an Indian a half-mile away would stampede Army mules and horses unaccustomed to them.

When the medicine-men or the individual deemed the right amount of parboiling had been achieved, the flaps of the shelter were dashed aside and the bather rushed to plunge into the cold stream and close the pores that the good inside could not escape.

When the chief medicine-man presided he kept up a continual singsong of religious texts and precepts.

After fasting three days and undergoing this, there was a further fast of three more days. It may not be wondered at, therefore, that the seeker of a name or new medicine saw visions. But imagine a general, an admiral and above all a Senator or Supreme Court Judge remarking—

"The clouds press upon me; I am sad; I have been wicked, *I will take a bath.*"

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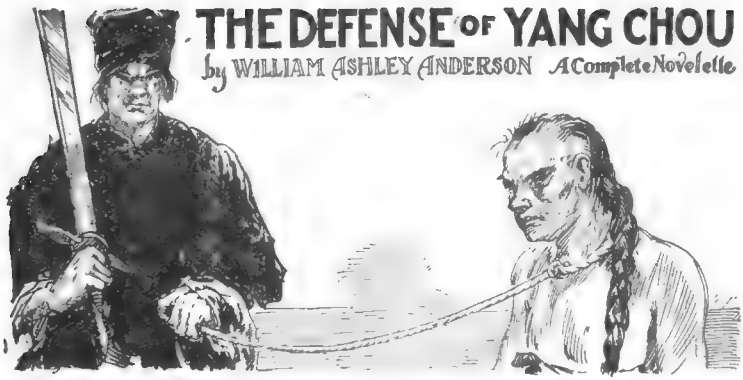

THE DEFENSE OF YANG CHOU

by WILLIAM ASHLEY ANDERSON *A Complete Novelette*

LATE in the summer of 1911, Webb, the manager in Tientsin for one of the biggest trading-companies in the Orient, found himself in a jam. He had just hit upon a rich bit of territory, waiting to be opened up to foreign trade; and the only man he had available for the job was one who had been in the employ of the company less than six months and was as adventurously erratic as an ownerless dog.

In common with the majority of the boys who were then opening up the interior of China to the commerce of the world—that is, prior to the revolution of 1911 that shattered the ancient empire and gave birth to a shaky republic—Arthur Colfax was gifted with a superheated imagination and a disposition to laugh at unfamiliar danger. He had originally run away from his home in Los Angeles, and his experience with the company was limited to one energetic trip down the Grand Canal in a junk.

As a result of that little expedition he had established himself in the good graces of Webb.

"I almost think you could swing it," said Webb looking at the young man with good-natured exasperation; "but, —— it, the trouble with you is you've got entirely too much imagination! I've got to send some one to Yang Chou; but he's got to keep his mind on business, and establish himself there sensibly. No fireworks! Yang Chou means important new territory for us. Here it is on the map—forty miles west of Tientsin, with Paotingfu the same distance beyond it. Peking is directly north, about eighty miles. The two railroads, starting from Peking and diverging southward until they reach the Yangtse River, pass Tientsin on one side and Paotingfu on the other. The Yangtse River is the dividing line between North and South China and the natural feeder for these roads. Get me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Yang Chou, you see, is in a perfect position for a depot. I want some one to take a boatload of stuff there, and if the place looks actually as good as it does on the map, fill up a godown and start business. But I want business—not flowery reports!"

Colfax swallowed hard, so as not to say something that would spoil his chance. After a moment's consideration, Webb continued briskly:

"All right! I'll send you. But I'm going to send Liu Johl to sit on your kid's imagination. He's the one called my attention to Yang Chou. Treat Liu white! He's risked his neck for me; and I'd risk mine for him. He's a Manchu, and he killed two Red Beards when we were working together opening up Manchuria—killed them with a sword. I saw him do it with my own eyes——"

"I'm to be boss, though?" interposed Colfax.

"Oh, yes. You're the white man; that's a fixed principle. Only I want you to understand that you're to cooperate with the utmost sympathy with Liu. He'll stick to you; you *must* stick to him! Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

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"Well, you'll like him, too. Here he is now."

Liu Johl was a heavy-set man from the north, with a full smooth-shaven face, tanned by the sun and exposure, and stamped with the impress of a strong and cheerful character. His eyes were calm and whimsical; his slow but unrestrained smile, parting his lips from a set of firm white teeth, showed a genial nature; while his firm jaw and small chin, his powerful but flexible neck, the carriage of his body as he walked quietly into the room, rubbing his hands together as he advanced, conveyed an impression of constant alertness, unruffled poise, and indomitable courage.

He wore a simple blue cotton Chinese coat, buttoned tight about his neck and extending to his ankles; and over this an embroidered black waistcoat. He wore a queue, and his head was freshly shaven. Altogether he gave an impression of cleanness, of remarkable intelligence, of great reserve power.

As he shook hands with Colfax the two men presented a remarkable contrast; the former, trim, powerful, reserved; the latter, impulsive, rash, wildly imaginative, playful, impatient, and so full of energy that he gave a suggestion of untidiness—his sandy hair rumpled, his blue eyes constantly changing expression, his somewhat lanky but strong body shifting uncomfortably from one attitude to another.

Liu Johl seemed to be slowly and shrewdly shouldering his way through life, enjoying the crowds about him; while Arthur Colfax rushed at life, shouting, laughing, waving his arms.

"Well," said the manager, after explaining his plans, "when do you people think you can start off?"

"This afternoon!" exclaimed Colfax.

"We'll have to hire a junk and crew," said Liu. "We'll want to make up a list of stuff to bring along, and have it put on board. Mr. Colfax will want to buy provisions, and hire a cook. Then we've got to get a crew. Say the day after tomorrow, in the morning."

"Can do," said the manager decisively.

Colfax made a deprecating gesture, feeling all at once uneasy, ashamed, incapable. Then his figure stiffened.

"All right, sir," he said. "I only meant that I'm ready for anything at any time!"

TWO days later Colfax and Liu embarked on a large river-junk, loaded with cases of medicines, candles, piece-goods, cigarets; and enough personal equipment to keep them in the field for several months. It took them two more days to reach Yang Chou.

The country they traversed was marshy, but cut by swift currents, still carrying off the floods that had swept over the plains early in the Spring, and the powerful coolies, bending to their work, poled laboriously without intermission along endless channels. For most of the distance sight of the plain was cut off by raw, muddy dykes, and miles of rank green *kaoliang* rising six or seven feet above the subsiding waters. This *kaoliang* stirred in murmuring waves beneath a warm wind. For most of the trip the scene was desolate; the only human sound that broke the stillness was the panting chant of the coolies and the rhythmic pounding of their feet along the decks.

Once near a bend in the channel they came upon a heap of corpses weltering upon a half-submerged mud-bank, where the subsiding flood had stranded them. They had been stripped by the crews of passing junks, and the naked bodies, half under water, half-exposed to the broiling sun, gave Colfax his first impression of the interminable struggle the Chinese peasants wage against the elements.

"Pooh," he exclaimed gasping for a breath of pure air, "that's one —— of an omen! It doesn't look to me as if we're going to get much out of this district, after all."

Liu made a slight grimace, but otherwise ignored the bodies.

"Accidents like floods can happen anywhere," he said. "The district is rich enough. It takes more than that to beat the Chinese."

As they progressed farther westward Colfax began to see increasing evidences of activity among the peasants. The farmers when the floods came upon them, had become sailors and fishermen. The bean-crop was being harvested by means of long rakes thrust down into eight feet of water. Farmers, in diving-suits of raw sheep-skin and bladders, pulled up lily-roots from the matted bottom with their naked hands. The *kaoliang* stalks were dried on platforms and made into fences for fish-traps. A fusillade, starting at daybreak, continued until nightfall as the hungry farmers shot

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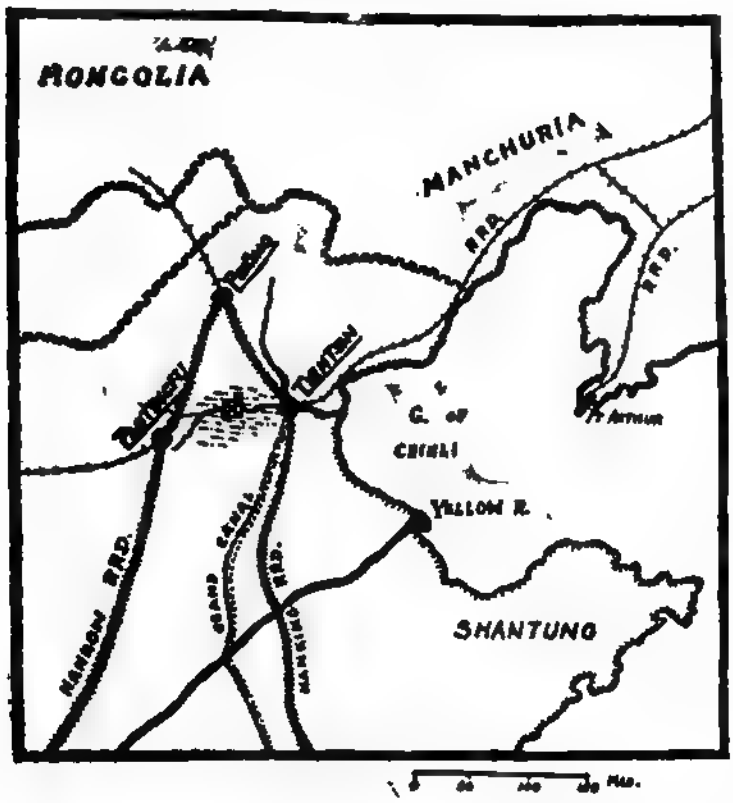
duck, snipe, and plover, with homemade powder in long wrought-iron guns. Junks and sampans increased in number, all apparently converging toward a common center.

On the second evening, as darkness fell suddenly upon them, Colfax came out of a doze to find their junk crowded in a mass of traffic. Shrill yells sounded on all sides; the junk bumped and rocked as it was forced into the mouth of a canal, on either side of which rose slimy, dark banks. Above them were silhouetted the irregular fantastic outlines of a congested Chinese town.



High arched bridges curved overhead. A small forest of masts stirred about them. A gray mist hung low over the canal, streaked with the smoke of damp fires, and saturated with the stink of open sewage and the rich fragrance of food frying in the crowded restaurants along the canal. Yells, oaths, loud shrill singing voices, bursts of laughter, the thump of a drum, the blanging of peddlers' triangles, and the deep bellow of a trumpet, gave voice to this wallowing, amphibious town.

Liu led the way up the dark, slimy bank, followed by Colfax, slipping and cursing in the unpleasant muck, and they plunged directly into a narrow alleyway, packed with blue-clad Chinese carrying small lanterns of isinglass, their sunburned cheerful countenances reflecting the red and yellow light of lamps suspended over the entrances of important shops.

In these smudges of light, Colfax was able to get fleeting impressions of this extraordinary town, rising on a mud-bank above the floods. It occupied a low island formed by the confluence of two small streams, which immediately separated and ran parallel for about a mile, and converged again in one stream flowing eastward. Swollen by flood, these main streams had overflowed their outer banks, emphasizing the island character of the isolated town.

Most of the buildings were of gray baked brick, with gray and green tiled roofs. Underfoot the alleyways were paved with slabs of stone. As Colfax and Liu groped their way through the strange alleys, led by an impatient guide who kept calling to them over his shoulder, and followed by cook and boatmen carrying their luggage, they stumbled through coal-yards and lumber-yards, down long alleys lined with dyeing establishments, the dripping cloth hanging from scaffolding above their heads slapping them in the face as they passed under. Once they saw a large oil-tank. At another point they passed a number of brick kilns rising against the deep blue, star-sprinkled sky, like pyramids; and the blackness beyond was shot with orange and white flame as they came upon a foundry working through the night. About them the night was filled with many voices. Darkness could not stop the activity of the natives; it hardly subdued them. But the shrill nasal voice of a sing-song girl entertaining friends; the breathless music of a *hu-hu;* and the mellow plunking of snake-skin banjos proved that there was pleasure in the night-life, as well as work.

Colfax felt dazed and awed by the richness and unexpected possibilities of the town. He felt a glowing sensation within him, that slowly set fire to him as the resources of the place were rapidly unfolded.

"Liu," he exclaimed; "we've hit it right!"

"Possibilities!" said Liu laconically.

"Possibilities! Why, it's rich! Are there any other foreigners in the place?"

Liu said with slow emphasis:

"*You* are the first foreigner who has ever seen it."

"What!"

"The first."

An electric thrill passed up Colfax's spine, leaving him tingling to his fingertips, breathing almost in gasps as his imagination suddenly caught him and swept him off his feet. His eyes glazed as his thoughts leaped

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ahead; and in his abstraction he stumbled over a scavenging sow.

"Yang Chou," said Liu in a burst of confidence, "is like the towns of old China. It has developed itself. It is a logical creation. It owes nothing—nothing—to foreign influence!"

"By ——," exclaimed Colfax, who had heard nothing, who could think of nothing, except that he was the first—the pioneer—the discoverer! "In three months I'm going to be mayor of this place, or—or chief of police!"

Startled, Liu looked sharply at him; then dropped his chin on his chest to repress a convulsive impulse to laugh.

"Get on, there!" Colfax yelled at the leader. "You people are too blamed slow!"

Eventually they came to a large brick screen upon which was painted a blue fire-dragon guarding the entrance to the merchant Faa Teh's place of business. Liu had already corresponded with this man, and so they were expected, and made welcome.

Faa Teh was fat and bland, with a jovial pock-marked face and shrewd, inscrutable eyes. He was, in fact, one of the richest and most influential merchants in Yang Chou, owning, in addition to his places of business, a couple of villas and some rather large estates in the districts bordering the floods where his farmers cultivated everything from orchards of jujube to fields of ground-nuts and *kaoliang*.

He had anticipated Colfax's and Liu's arrival, and a luxurious dinner was waiting for them, served on a carved ebony table in a retiring room off Faa Teh's offices. Three other guests were there to make the meal convivial. They were Faa Teh's agent at the town of Chow-chow; his agent at the town of Su-chow; and his own *compradore*. The *compradore* was young, quiet, gentle, but remarkably intelligent and always on the alert to be of assistance. The two country agents were weather-beaten but shrewd elderly fellows of much local experience, and far too sensible to waste time being shy of the foreigner when a steaming repast was waiting their attention.

The six men fell to noisily upon dishes of duck steamed to melting tenderness in an aromatic sauce, silver mandarin fish floating in a delicious brown gravy, chips of mutton crisped in boiling fat, plovers' eggs poached in chicken broth, a delicately sweet soup of lily-buds, with hot bread, rice, nuts, and sweetmeats. All this they washed down with constant potations of hot wine distilled from the juice of *kaoliang*. It was served in tiny thimble-like cups, so that the effect of its potency was long drawn out.

The steaming pewter-pot circulated faster and faster; the six men, well-fed and comfortable, began to talk and laugh louder and louder as their insides warmed with conviviality. The two countrymen, turning back their cuffs, leaned across the table, gambling with their fingers, yelling with fierce concentration until they won or lost a point, when they would lift the wine to their lips and throw their heads back, spluttering and coughing as it went down mixed with laughter. Faa Teh's head seemed to be swelling to double its natural proportions, his countenance turning slowly to a brick-red color, his eyes brimming with benevolence and pleasant thoughts.

Colfax, gulping down the tiny cupfuls, began to feel a sort of amazement at the emotions it inspired. He found himself before many hours had passed patting his host upon the knee in an excess of good-fellowship—while the merchant prince gazed at him with affable approval—promising to make him the richest man in North China in exchange for his political support. As Faa Teh didn't understand a word of the American's proposition and was serenely content with his lot as it was, he slowly gained the impression that something was lacking in the hospitality he had offered the foreigner. Of all the company, the young and gentle *compradore* seemed the most sober, the only change in him being a melancholy disapproval of Colfax's ambitious projects. Once Colfax caught the expression on his face.

"I don't like you," said Colfax, dismissing him from his consideration with a wave of his hand; "you're too thin—and—and you're pickled—sour!"

"He doesn't understand English," said Liu solemnly.

"Ah," said Faa Teh, who had been trying to solve the problem of Colfax's earnest inquiries, "he wants more entertainment! Masters, I know where there are some beautiful girls who will sing for us."

"Master, forgive me," said Liu, rising and bowing politely; "but the illustrious foreigner and my own miserable self are both married men. We don't care for that sort of thing."

Faa Teh sat down heavily, clapping his

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plump hand to his forehead, and making a grimace.

"I didn't think of that," he muttered with a look of dumb misery.

Then, sighing deeply, he scrambled to his feet once more and put his hands on Colfax's shoulder, nodding his head loosely. "Friend," he said with tears in his eyes; "you must excuse me. I must go home. I must! If my wife sees me in this drunken condition, there—there will be serious trouble."

"W'at's 'at 'e's—hic—saying?" asked Colfax smiling waterily at Liu over his unhappy friend's shoulder.

"Says he's sorry—married—must go home——"

"I'm not married," protested Colfax as drowsiness suddenly came upon him. He tried to look indignant; but his expression melted into an ingratiating smirk. At that moment the elderly agent from Chow-chow slipped from his seat, and fell snoring upon the floor.

"Can stay out all night," insisted Colfax and gazed with an expression of mingled curiosity and misbelief, as the *compradore*, with a look of holy protest, dragged the disheveled Chow-chow agent from beneath the table.

That was the last thing Colfax recollected clearly.

The next morning Liu came to his room, where his cook had put him to sleep. His impressions of the night before were very hazy. He felt ashamed, angry, impatient; and as he rose to speak to Liu, he yelled for the cook to bring him water for a bath.

"I've fixed it up with Faa Teh," said Liu, lighting a cigaret.

"Fixed what up?"

"Why, he's willing to manage a depot for us here. The proposition is this: He will deposit forty-five thousand dollars in bank in Tientsin; and we'll ship him goods against it, either from Paotingfu or Tientsin. He gets six per cent, on that total if he keeps it working, besides his regular profits. He'll fill a godown here with stock, and establish sub-dealers where we suggest. What do you think? Can do?"

"Liu," said Colfax dazedly, feeling a sort of resentment within him; "so far as I'm concerned the thing's done. When did you talk to him about it?"

"Last night, at dinner."

Colfax put his hands to his head and groaned.

"All I seem to remember," he said, "was that young high-binder of a *compradore* pushing the other fellows under the table. I haven't done anything yet," he exclaimed with a sudden access of energy, jumping to his feet and nervously arranging his toilet articles; "I haven't done anything but talk."

"Well, you don't speak Chinese well enough," said Liu deprecatingly. "That's what I'm here for. It was a straight proposition. If he hadn't accepted, some one else would. I only did the talking for you."

"But I—I must have been tight. Why, Liu, Faa Teh was drunk! He'll renege. He'll go back on his word!"

"No," said Liu decisively. "If you're satisfied, Faa Teh will give me a draft on his Tientsin agent tomorrow for the full amount and I'll go back to Tientsin to arrange about transportation."

"Liu," said Colfax after a moment's silence, "shake hands. You're all right! I haven't done anything yet. I don't like to take credit for what you've done here; but you stick to me, and I'll stick to you!"

DURING Liu's absence Colfax took stock of his own qualifications, and finally settled firmly on his line of conduct. Accepting without further hesitation the obvious fact that Liu was his superior in many respects, he immediately set to work to overcome the handicap.

He made a thorough survey of the town, closely estimating its resources. He canvassed all the shops of the town in company with Faa Teh and the cook, who acted as an interpreter, and made a close record of the business done in every single place. He reconstructed his map of the entire district, locating possible sub-dealers for Faa Teh, and closely figuring the cost of transport to all points by junk, sampan, wheelbarrow and cart. He even worked out a careful list of selling prices adapted to the various country markets and the local fluctuations of exchange. Above all, he practised Chinese incessantly, jabbering with coolies, artisans, merchants, children, and women, until he suddenly gained confidence in his speech and discovered the marvelous flexibility of even a limited vocabulary.

When Liu returned from Tientsin a week later, the machinery for distributing the new stock was already in working-order. The stock was disposed of through sub-agents in less than a month; and Liu made another

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trip to the Treaty Port to double Faa Teh's deposits, and to secure a quantity of advertising matter to boom the new dealer's trade. Colfax himself refused to go.

"I'm not going to leave this town," he said, "until everybody in the whole —— forsaken district knows me!"

"They know you now," said Liu; "you've been in every village, and made friends in every shop."

"They know me by sight," said Colfax; "but you don't quite get me. I mean they're going to know me as the big boss. I don't care if I don't go for three months or three years. But when I do go, they'll be blowing their big trumpets to tell the world!"

Already, as a matter of fact, the main headquarters of the company, at Shanghai, had taken note of the sudden activity in the Yang Chou district and had even sent a complimentary telegram to the manager at Tientsin, who duly forwarded it to Colfax. Colfax himself would undoubtedly have received some marked attention; but the affairs of the company were becoming dangerously threatened by the disturbed political condition of the country.

With the approach of cold weather, the success of the revolution in the South had become assured. The strongholds of the Northern forces along the Yangtse River had fallen overnight, and the defeated troops were backing slowly northward holding firmly to the railroad lines. Manchuria, in the northeast, then declared its independence in order to insure itself against the encroachments of the Japanese; and Shantung province, the great peninsula jutting out of the eastern shore, the poaching-ground of the Germans, had seceded.

The old Chinese empire had passed away with the whimper of the little boy emperor, a refugee in the Wagon-Lits Hotel at Peking.

The new republic had been established.

The form of the new republic, however, was still clouded in uncertainty. The amazing suddenness of the success of dreamers, half-baked reformers, unstable fanatics, had left the revolutionists with an immense empire on their hands without the ability to apply their ideas practically. The country was slipping rapidly into anarchy.

All that held China together was the stubborn resistance of a group of old-fashioned conversatives at Peking. These men led the Northern faction. Cynical, accustomed to war, wise, alertly aware of the teeth of the Japanese tiger in the East, and the claws of the Russian bear on the North, they yielded slowly and grudgingly to the clamoring of the immediate reformers. Ferocious but sensible old General Chang, commanding the loyal Northern troops, drew a battleline across China from east to west, and waited there for the Southerners.

Nothing could dislodge the Northern troops save a successful flank attack; and this was impossible. Secure behind this line, the Peking Government tried desperately but quietly to stablize the country, and to bring an orderly nation out of impending chaos.

The Southerners, on the other hand, were impatient for office and the usual fruits of such victories as they had achieved. Where they could gain nothing by battle, they tried to gain victories by corrupting the Northerners and inciting mutiny.

The Great Powers in turn, massing their forces at strategic points, waited impatiently for the break-up to grab what they could.

All this at first meant nothing to Colfax in his strangely isolated domain. So long as Tientsin forwarded goods to him, he was confident of the increasing success of the Yang Chou business. Though Liu and he had built rapidly, they had built firmly. Colfax was beginning to feel the dignity and elation of success. His heart and soul were filled with a clear ambition. He refused to consider any possibility of falling down.

All at once a wave of uneasiness seemed to pass over the country.

Panic swept the country districts.

Mutiny broke out in Tientsin; and the richest parts of that great city were burned and pillaged. Order was not restored until decapitated bodies littered the gutters, and gory heads hung by their queues from the street-lights. Paotingfu, in turn, was swept by conflagration and gutted by looters.

Peking itself, the capital of the nation, at last was lighted by tongues of flame that licked its ancient walls.

The manager at Tientsin wrote Colfax to come in for safety. Colfax ignored the letter, pretending it had gone astray. The American consul-general forwarded a message pointing out the danger, and requesting him to return to the Port. Colfax tore it up.

"Liu," said Colfax, "you can go back to Tientsin if you want; but I'm going to stay right here and do business."

"There's no business," said Liu, looking

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at him quizzically. "The shop-keepers are burying their money and closing their shops. The market yesterday was almost empty. The pawnshops have put up their iron bars."

"What are they afraid of?" exclaimed Colfax with exasperation.

"Well, there are robbers and black-legs and mutinous soldiers everywhere. Tientsin, Paotingfu, even Peking have been burned and looted. Why won't they loot this place? It is rich. There is no one to protect it."

"Why, it's surrounded by a regular sea of mud and water," protested Colfax, "not deep enough for big junks, and too deep for any force of men on foot."

"When I was in Manchuria," interposed Liu. "I saw a walled city captured and looted by fifty Red Beards."

"Well, no fifty Red Beards are going to capture this place," said Colfax impatiently, "not while I'm here. This is my bailiwick. I was here first!"

He stood still, biting his thumbnail, his brows drawn down in a frown as his racing thoughts tried to find some solution; while Liu, opening a box of cigarets, watched him furtively. All at once the American's face cleared, and a bright twinkling expression came into his eyes.

"Liu," he said, "all we've got to do is train a home-defense force!"

Liu laughed ironically.

"Listen," insisted Colfax, warming to his own proposition, "this is a simple sensible plan. The Merchants Guild is very rich; it can easily afford to train a small reliable force that can be depended on to fight. It's good insurance. Faa Teh will see that argument; and I'll bet you the Guild will be willing to pay the bill."

"But who will train them?"

"I'll train them myself! I was sergeant-major of the cadet battalion in a military school for two years; I was in the national guard for about a year and a half; my father is a colonel in the regular army; and I've lived on army posts. The only reason I didn't go to West Point was that my two brothers beat me to it; and—and I beat it!"

"Perhaps it can be done," said Liu with a flash of enthusiasm.

They went to Faa Teh and put the proposition to him. Faa Teh, like all Chinese merchants, dreaded the soldiery. He was dubious. He didn't like to get involved with firearms.

"My Lord," exclaimed Colfax, "you don't seem to understand! If bandits get into this town, they won't leave anything but a pile of bricks. Two months later all there'll be of Yang Chou will be a heap of mud; and you—fat, jolly, a good fellow—you—will—be—slime!"

Faa Teh made a grimace and shuddered.

"He doesn't like the idea of death," explained Liu.

"Doesn't like it! Who does? But it's all around us just the same. Doesn't like it!"

"No," said Faa Teh firmly. "I don't like it. And," he added with a sudden burst of feeling, "I don't even like to hear you talk about it."

"All right," said Colfax; "but if you have your own soldiers, you needn't worry any longer about it. If you had only a few companies here, properly trained, it would take an army to dislodge them."

At this point the dark young *compradore*, who had been listening attentively to the discussion, joined his voice enthusiastically with Colfax's. He caught the spark, and, if anything, flamed with greater enthusiasm than the American, so that Colfax began to feel that he was being robbed of his powder, and wanted to slap him.

"All right! All right!" cried Faa Teh. "Have it your own way. I'm old-fashioned."

He tapped his forehead hard with his knuckles.

"In all probability I'm an old fool. But I'll speak to the members of the Guild. No. You, my *compradore*, will do the talking for me. But, understand plainly, if there's any fighting, I'm going to close these doors and go on a visit to my villa at Chow-chow—just as my father did before me!"

"I will take entire charge," said the *compradore* with shrill enthusiasm.

The merchants were called together at the guild-house; and argued reluctantly into accepting the proposition. At length they declared their willingness to support the guards on condition that Colfax would guarantee the efficiency of their training. All they required, as merchants, was a state of peace in which to carry on their business. The *compradore*, who had been elected to form a committee of safety, said if necessary they would secure the professional services of Chinese officers trained by the Germans at Machang.

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Colfax was given the honorary title of captain, and proceeded immediately to drill his troops.

As his recruits, powerful rugged men, began to come in from the country, it occurred to Colfax that this was one of the most powerful means possible of securing prestige; and he threw himself with all his mind and heart into the work of drilling and organizing a skeleton battalion. His boiling energy made possible the fulfillment of every plan, while attending to his business at the same time.

First he trained a squad of non-coms in drill and handling of rifles; with these as instructors, he trained a platoon. As the Chinese are naturally quick to learn, and absolutely untiring, Colfax kept them at it from dawn till night, and sometimes brought them out at midnight on alarms. By the time the platoon was ready to be employed as instructors, several cases of Mannlichers and ammunition arrived mysteriously from Tientsin; and the first company was immediately organized.

Colfax had intended to order the weapons himself, but Liu argued him out of it.

"You know the law," said Liu. "If the American officials find out you're acting as a soldier, they'll deport you!"

"Wow!" exclaimed Colfax. "I never thought of that."

When he pointed the difficulty out to the *compradore*, the president of the Committee of Safety shrugged his shoulders.

"It's of no importance," he said. "I have a correspondent in Tientsin who will attend to it."

As the organization developed Colfax found he couldn't give it the attention he had at first intended, for the business of Yang Chou began to pick up rapidly once more. Even merchants of Paotingfu and Tientsin, hearing that business was being done safely at Yang Chou transported their stock at considerable risk to swell the congested markets of the island town. As the town gained in richness and importance, the need for protection increased.

The president of the Committee of Safety sent on his own responsibility to Machang to engage an officer to take full charge of the town-guards, relieving Colfax of the responsibility. Colfax, however, retained all the glory; and was treated with even unusual consideration by his colleagues. Faa Teh thought it a great joke, and poked fun at him. The *compradore* was effusively friendly, borrowing his maps and arguing with him on strategy.

Liu, alone, seemed distrustful and perturbed.

"It's bad business," he said.

"Bad business!" exclaimed Colfax. "Look at our sales! This is the only district in the north that's showing a steady increase!"

"I don't mean that," explained Liu. "I don't like this new officer from Machang!"

"Oh, as to that," said Colfax indifferently. "I don't like the pasty-faced *compradore* either; but in the name of—eh—patriotism we've got to overlook our personal prejudices!"

THE new commander was styled General Wing.

General Wing had an air of restrained officiousness about him that seemed to indicate a man of the mandarin order who seemed to have grown impatient of the unwieldy restrictions of the civil service. His eyes stared with a sort of false candor, and his pouting lip had an incongruous suggestion of avarice and cruelty at the corners. He was a most ambitious man. He was also inordinately lazy, and a glutton.

As General Wing sat at the head of the table at Colfax's councils of war, he would nod his head with an air of profound abstraction, saying nothing and only stirring to wave his hand for a fresh pot of tea which he drank noisily. When not drinking tea he was incessantly cracking melon-seeds between his little teeth.

General Wing brought a new set of officers with him. So far as training the guards went, they were as lazy and indifferent as himself. They were a mixed lot of classroom commanders, and possessed only two outstanding characteristics in common—great awe and diffidence in their attitude toward General Wing, and the fury of composition. They wrote endless reports in copper-plate brush-work, while they sipped tea and smoked cigarets.

The *compradore*, too, as president of the Committee of Safety—the man who paid all the bills—was treated with flattering respect.

The attitude of these men toward Colfax was peculiar. They were constantly in attendance upon him; urged him frequently to dine with them; borrowed his maps; flattered him into making a relief map of the district for them in clay over which he

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lectured them on the elements of strategy; and generally treated him with so much consideration and such undivided attention that Colfax often retired to his own quarters with feelings mingled of self-consciousness, foolishness, and an impulse to roar with laughter.

Nevertheless, his instruction was good. He discussed the principles of strategy—which he got mainly out of a book—with the certitude of a great commander, because, since he was acting over his relief map within the safe limitations of harmonious theory, he showed far more determination, dash, and insight than any man could be expected to show when actually confronted by an enemy.

His imagination encompassed everything. When his pupils' minds were straining at battalions, he demonstrated to them how they could raise, equip, and lead whole divisions—by reading in back of the book!

They presented him with a uniform and a sword.

It was a becoming uniform of gray quilted cotton, with the trousers tucked into brown Manchu boots. He wore a soft-crowned visored cap with it; and the blue letters splashed upon the breast of the tunic—"Soldiers of Safety"— gave a distinguished touch of color.

When the presentation was made, General Wing, coming out of his dropsical abstraction, made a few friendly but pertinent remarks. In conclusion he said—

"You understand, of course, that if any of your countrymen hear of your association with a military force in this country, it will cause great trouble—great trouble—both for you and for ourselves."

"So far as I am concerned," said Colfax. "I don't intend to breathe a word about it."

"Good. One more thing; remember the defense of this town is not a game to us. It is a serious matter. We ourselves undertake it, knowing this. We make sacrifices to our own feelings."

"Well, can't you see," protested Colfax indignantly, yet feeling a strong itch to laugh at the fat man's pompousness, "that my own interests are involved?"

"Good. But so far we have had no trouble. All dangerous blackguards realize that we are prepared. On the other hand, if there is trouble—and we hear there are even great disturbances in the neighboring places—we must treat the trouble-makers as is customary in the Chinese tribunals."

"Oh," said Colfax, feeling a cool breath pass over him. "I see."

"Good," said General Wing, and proceeded to crack melon-seeds between his teeth.

After a moment Colfax, said, beginning to feel serious—

"We'd better take precautions, then."

"Do you think there is immediate danger? Only a small force of ruffians would find it worth while to approach, and such we could easily handle. What is gained by activity that has not a definite object?"

"We might be surprized at night."

"True. Good. Make your plans, and I will support you. We appreciate your assistance. We appreciate it very much!"

Then Colfax's fun commenced. Too busy during the day to attend to the guards, he inaugurated night tattooes, marching about town blowing bugles, beating drums, and waving torches. He even built two mud forts.

One at the eastern extremity of the island mounted a battery of six guns. Two huge duck-guns; one a piece of wired gas-pipe; another an old brass swivel; and two iron mortars.

The other fort was at the upper end of the town and topped an abandoned brick-kiln. Its entire battery was a huge swivel-gun, which looked like a giant telescope, and which none of Colfax's gunners—including himself—dared discharge.

This display of force had its effect.

Confident of safety, the markets continued to be crowded, the canals were choked with loaded junks and sampans, and the shops remained open doing a brisk trade. At night Colfax used to listen to the big junks banging and creaking along the narnow canals, the water slapping musically against the muddy banks, the boatmen chanting explosively, and feel a curious thrill within him. As he saw the lights flickering in the godowns, and the busy coolies shuffling past Faa Teh's compound working far into the night, he could not help feeling the value of his own importance.

He had outgrown the acute loneliness which most young men feel around the end of their first year in China. He had become so thoroughly saturated with the spirit of his work, in fact, that he had no immediate desire to return to the Treaty Port. His intimate contacts with the natives had made him forget his own alien nature. Liu and

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he had so much in common that Colfax no longer looked on his companion as anything but one of his own kind.

But one night as they were returning together to their quarters in Faa Teh's compound, hanging on to each other as they slipped and stumbled along the irregular, slimy stone pavements, a vaguely unpleasant idea occurred to Colfax.

"Liu," he said, "what did that fat beggar Wing mean by practically telling me to mind my own business about punishing the guards?"

"I don't know. Maybe he thought you might object."

"Why should I?"

"Well, sometimes they might have to torture them."

"Wow!" exclaimed Colfax softly. "I never thought of that."

After a moment he added:

"Well, it lets me out anyway. I am a foreigner after all. And you—you've never had anything to do with the guards."

"I'm like Faa Teh," said Liu. "I don't like hot-headed soldiers. I don't like fighting."

"Ah! How about the two Red Beards in Manchuria?"

"I had to kill those men," protested Liu, "because they wanted to cut my feet off so I couldn't run for help!"

The sharp crash of an explosion suddenly rocked the town. A flash of light seared Liu's and Colfax's eyes, distended in the dark. Darkness instantly clapped down on the town again.

The darkness was velvet. The murmuring, the humming sound of the town's populace, the hubbub of activity, stopped in the catching of a breath. Every one seemed on tiptoe, listening. Tiles rattled from some distant roofs and fell with the sharp clash of breaking glass.

"I know!" yelled Colfax. "It was the big swivel-gun. Come on!"

He began to run toward the east battery; but Liu, slipping around a corner, fled back to the safety of Faa Teh's compound.

All at once the dark wall of the eastern sky was streaked with comets and shooting-stars; the air throbbed with the crash of irregular explosions; the sound of musketry ripped in the streets. A rising moan that ended in a roar passed over the town. Tiles skittered into the alleyways. In a moment a yelling tumult filled the town. Shutters and iron bars rattled into place; great wooden gates closed with muffled bangs; indescribable confusion arose along the congested canal.

Colfax, with the blood pounding in his temples, stifling with excitement, plunged toward his battery of duck-guns and old gas-pipe and iron mortars, blowing frantically on his whistle and cursing at the absence of his guards. Then bugles began to blow, and trumpets blared like bulls. By this time the uproar was tremendous; and as Colfax broke from the alleyways, followed by a handful of his soldiers, the open space where he had placed his mud fort was seething with excited men in uniform, their faces appearing perfectly yellow in the orange flashes of the guns.

General Wing was in the midst of them. By some marvelous impulse and sudden force of energy he appeared to have propelled himself at great speed to the scene of action. All action had been halted; but the objects of the tumult were in the center of the mob, screaming angrily, waving their hands, frothing at the mouth. These were thirty deserters in uniform from Tientsin. They had been captured at the entrance of the canal on a junk loaded with guns and ammunition.

As General Wing caught sight of Colfax shouldering his way toward him, he raised his hand peremptorily, and shouted in a shrill voice:

"It's all right, Captain Colfax. The matter is settled. If you will return to your quarters, we will attend to these men!"

Colfax froze in his tracks, and he felt a ripple of genuine fear run up his spine. The ominous suggestion in the fat man's words left him speechless. At that moment the *compradore* jerked him by the sleeve.

"It is all right," he repeated. "Please go back now. There is nothing to be done."

"What are you going to do with them?" demanded Colfax shakily.

"Nothing will be done until tomorrow. Please go."

Colfax had no choice. There was a note in the thin little *compradore's* voice, and an expression in the large eye, that did not invite debate. Turning thoughtfully, his anger smothered under a feeling of uneasiness, he made his way back to Faa Teh's compound. It was obvious that Wing and the *compradore* wanted him out of the way while they disposed of their prisoners; yet,

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despite the sinister implication in this, Colfax got the puzzling impression that the so-called prisoners had been protesting with increasing indignation at their rough reception—and Wing was trying to placate them rather than suppress them. At the same time Colfax's recruits, who had made the capture, looked abashed and apologetic rather than triumphant. It was a Chinese puzzle he could not yet solve!

The firing had stopped. An unnatural silence hung over the town. The streets were deserted, except for occasional guards patrolling the alleyways. These men told Colfax that a cordon had been drawn about the town, with sampans as patrol-boats; and the market had been closed.

"Well," said Colfax dubiously, "we probably saved the town at that!"

There was no sign of Faa Teh in the compound. Colfax came upon Liu looking bedraggled and muddy.

"What's the matter?" said Colfax.

"I was having an argument with Faa Teh," said Liu with a grimace, his hand shaking slightly as he raised his cigaret to his lips.

"Where is he?"

"Gone to Chow-chow! I tried to argue with him after the first gun went off. Then the battery began to fire, and I couldn't even hold him. He is a strong man!"

The next morning General Wing sent for Colfax. He had set up new headquarters in the magistrate's *yamen*, declaring the place in a state of siege. At first this alarmed Colfax; but the *compradore*, who was present declared the arrangement excellent, and Colfax was satisfied. Wing was affable and flattering—too much so; for Colfax began to feel that the unfathomable Chinese was trying to cover the real facts in a flurry of insincere words.

"It is necessary," he explained, "to be careful. Those soldiers who were captured last night were on their way to Paotingfu to reenforce the troops there. They had no intention of disturbing us. Nevertheless your men did well. I compliment you. If there is trouble you are blameless."

"The Committee of Safety," said the *compradore*, looking at Colfax with a peculiar half-abashed expression, "appreciates what you have done. You may have saved the merchants of Yang Chou much loss. See. We appreciate faithfulness."

He pushed a canvas bag containing about two hundred dollars in silver toward the dumfounded American. Flattered, embarrassed, and very much perplexed by this informal presentation, Colfax declined the gift, pointing out that he had no use for it, and, as a foreigner, he could not accept it under any circumstances.

"In that case," said General Wing with a cynical lift of his eyebrows, "you might at least reward your men with it."

For this purpose Colfax accepted the money.

"What have you done with the prisoners?" he asked hesitatingly.

"I TOLD you it was a mistake," said General Wing hurriedly, choking over a hot cup of tea. "We could do nothing but permit them to continue on to Paotingfu."

"Ah," exclaimed Colfax with a feeling of great relief.

As he approached the compound, however, with one of Faa Teh's clerks carrying the bag of money, he found a half-dozen strange soldiers waiting for him with expectant grins on their countenances. All of them showed signs of slight wounds, and were much bandaged and painted with liniment. Saluting him, they demanded compensation for their injuries.

"What the —— is this?" spluttered Colfax. "Am I expected to be a pension bureau?"

Speaking in Chinese, he said to them: "The Committee of Safety pays you for your services. The Committee of Safety will pay you if you are hurt. It is no business of mine."

"But it was *your* soldiers who injured us!"

"*My* soldiers! I don't understand."

"Well, master, we came from Tientsin last night——"

"From Tientsin? Are you the men who were on the junk?"

"Yes. As we entered Yang Chou, your soldiers fired guns upon us. We were abused and we were injured. See, with your own eyes!"

"But they said you had gone on to Paotingfu! Where did you get those uniforms?" added Colfax in bewilderment, pointing at the letters, "Soldiers of Safety" on their new gray tunics. "If you just came from Tientsin, what are you doing in those uniforms?"

"That," said one of the soldiers coolly,

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"is an entirely different matter. It was not in these uniforms we were injured; it was in our others. All we want from you is compensation."

"I say, Liu," called Colfax bewilderedly, "what do you make of this?"

Liu came to the doorway, and Colfax pointed out the inexplicable complication—the deserters from Tientsin had apparently been enrolled in the Yang Chou guards!

Liu said hurriedly in English, backing quickly through the door.

"I don't know. I'd advise you to return that money. The *compradore* can pay them."

"Right," said Colfax, and returning with the money he handed it back to the *compradore*. He did not like the *compradore*, so he simply said he was too busy to distribute the money himself, and preferred to have the committee give it out, relieving him from any suspicion of responsibility. The *compradore* regarded him with an enigmatic look, but took back the money without comment.

Colfax found Liu in his room waiting for him, pacing nervously up and down. As he entered Liu said—

"I've decided to go back to Tientsin."

"All right, Liu. It's better than going to Chow-chow at that. When do you want to leave?"

"Now. Tonight."

"Oh, say! Can't you wait until tomorrow, so I can have a chance to straighten my reports."

"No. I must go tonight."

"Well, —— it, then, if that's the way you feel about it, why don't you go now in daylight? I don't see why you're so blamed funky about it, though."

Liu halted and looked at Colfax steadily. The two men stared for a moment at each other in silence, Colfax a bit resentfully and with just the faintest hint of scorn; while the stubborn set of Liu's jaw was weakened by a fleeting uncertainty in the eyes, as if he felt obliged to explain his action yet did not want to involve himself in a discussion. At length he said:

"Wing has forbidden any one to go from or enter Yang Chou—except soldiers! You can write me a pass and stamp it with your officer's chop. At night maybe I can use it to get by—if they see me. I'd have a chance to explain, anyway. In daylight too many would recognize me!"

"Well, why not explain? Wing will surely give you a pass."

"I'll tell you. You are a philosopher; you'll understand. When Faa Teh went to Chow-chow, you laughed. You did not despise him; you understood. Well, I do not care if you laugh at me; I also am a philosopher. But if it is necessary for me to explain to Wing and the *compradore* and a lot of clerks, they will all laugh. I will lose face entirely! My philosophy doesn't stretch that far; besides it would be bad business. I was sent here to help you establish the business here. What could I say if I were the cause of ruining it?"

Colfax shrugged his shoulders.

"All right," he said dully, "if that's the way you feel about it. I'll write the pass, and you can slip out some time tonight."

"I want you to understand this," said Liu slowly, frowning; "for you there is no danger whatever—otherwise I would not go!"

"I understand," said Colfax without any great interest.

Liu would take nothing with him, and throughout the rest of the day he waited impatiently without venturing even into the street. About sunset Colfax was attracted to the outer door by a disturbance in the street.

A patrol was marching three suspicious characters in as prisoners. Even in the dusk Colfax could see that one of them was without a queue.

His skin was very pale, accentuating heavy black eyebrows, and though his head only came up to the shoulders of his captors, he had an insolent air about him that was distinctly remarkable. As he passed he turned his head and looked at the doorway where Colfax was standing with Liu at his shoulder. A blank expression of astonishment for an instant on the prisoner's face, and Liu fell back into the shadow with a slight intake of breath.

Tugging at Colfax's elbow he urged him to return immediately to his room.

"Just a minute," said Colfax impatiently, stepping out into the street to speak to a passing friend. It was five minutes before he returned to the room. As he opened the door, Liu said forcibly:

"Please give me the pass. I must go immediately—immediately!"

"Oh, for ——'s sake, Liu," Colfax protested, "can't you go a little more slowly? Let's have some dinner——"

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"No! Now! Now! If you won't give me the pass, I'll have to go without it!"

In the midst of this argument there was a noise in the yard. Liu flung up his hand involuntarily for silence, a startled expression on his countenance. Then with an oath he tried to seize Colfax's revolver; but he wasn't quick enough. The door was flung open; three gray-clad figures flung themselves upon him; and they fell to the floor, struggling, panting, and thrashing about.

Colfax reeled backward with a row of razor-edged pikes presented at his stomach, as the room filled with soldiers and *yamen* runners.

After the first sharp struggle there was silence. The low-hung lamp gave only a feeble light on Liu's prostrate form and the sullen-faced pikemen bending over him. Outside, in the compound yard, big red paper lanterns danced in the dark. Colfax could distinctly hear the casual clicking of an abacus handled by some clerk working in the counting-room, and subconsciously he distinguished the smell of mutton being cooked for his dinner. The rolling boom of a great-bellied drum throbbed through the night. The air was chilly though filled with dust from the struggle on the floor; and the shocking suddenness of the attack made Colfax feel a dizziness that gave an air of unreality to the situation.

When he caught his breath and his faculties cleared, he stammered confusedly:

"What's the matter? What are you doing here?"

Liu's voice, muffled in the folds of a blanket they had wrapped about his head, cried out:

"Go to Tientsin! Go—tell the *taotai!*"

With an obscene oath a pikeman dropped on him with both knees and began to choke him into silence. Colfax's hand closed on his revolver. Instinctively he threw it forward, sweeping the pressing circle with it, and leveled it at the pikeman.

"G-get off! You—you—you—" he stammered, incoherent with excitement. "Get off—or I'll shoot your —— head off!"

The pikeman, turning his head, merely frowned; but at this moment the little *compradore* stepped forward, saying sharply in perfect English:

"It is ordered by General Wing. We only want this person."

He prodded Liu with his foot. Colfax's brain took fire and he lunged murderously at the *compradore*. The *compradore* simply fell back, raising his hand and exclaiming with the petulant authority of a schoolteacher:

"Be careful, Captain Colfax! Be careful, sir! This man, Liu, is a dangerous spy! It was his plan to betray us!"

"Spy!" exclaimed Colfax, choking. "Don't be a fool!"

Frowning, the *compradore* said in mincing tones:

"You do not understand. Well, you can do no harm now. I will tell you this much. We are all brothers here, brother citizens of the new republic—liberty! Fraternity! The rights of mankind! For those ideals we sacrifice ourselves! Hush!"

The little *compradore's* eyes were blazing with the inspiration of a fanatical and bigoted orator. His right hand was uplifted. His forefinger had been amputated at the second joint.

"See," he cried shaking the hand toward the prostrate Liu; "with this finger, cut by my own knife, at a convention at Canton I wrote my name in blood—'Ready to die for liberty!' The old order passes away! The aristocrats have fed upon the people too long! Now it is time for the people to——"

Liu's voice, in the momentary silence as the exalted *compradore* groped for the word he wanted, sounded distinctly through the smothering blanket:

"Report to the *taotai!* He'll trap these rebels!"

"Hush!" murmured the *compradore*, annoyed at the interruption. "Now it is the time for the people to—to feast upon the aristocrats. At last our plans are complete. You, sir, have assisted. The new government will reward you! But this dullard—this reactionary toad-eater—this spy of the obstructionists at Peking, would betray our plans!"

"What the —— are you talking about?" demanded Colfax dazedly.

"Mr. Colfax," said the *compradore* with dignity, utterly incapable of resisting the dramatic opportunity of the moment, "we are about to strike a blow at the *rear* of General Chang's forces. We have mobilized our strength secretly here in Yang Chou. Now we are ready to strike!"

If the *compradore* had hoped to gain a startling effect with this dramatic utterance, he was deeply disappointed and chagrined;

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for Colfax, feeling a sudden relaxing reaction from the tenseness of the moment before, leaned back against the wall and burst into a shout of hysterical laughter.

This mirth, however, was of no use to Liu; for the soldiers and pikemen dragged him away to the *yamen*, still choking:

"Go to Tientsin! Never mind me! Go!"

WHEN Colfax found himself left alone he spent a very unhappy hour. Though he was convinced, as somewhat of an expert, that the military aspect of the plan he had just heard divulged was absolutely ridiculous, nevertheless he realized that the Chinese had made him play their game exactly as they pleased, while laughing at him up their sleeves. This phase of the situation infuriated him. In the midst of his rage, however, he would suddenly recall the battalion of home-guards, "Soldiers of Safety," he had recruited and drilled, and the fiasco of the night-attack; and he would snort with nervous laughter.

The idea of this skeleton battalion of farmers marching southward to attack General Chang in the rear was as good as a cartoon! He pictured the duck-guns being dragged across the plains as field-pieces! Nevertheless, he knew the Chinese coolie well enough to realize that he would face any task cheerfully if he were well enough paid for it. Nor did he have any boyish illusions as to their personal loyalty to him. They served the paymaster!

The imprisonment of Liu, however, was not funny. While Colfax believed firmly that Wing would not dare injure Liu, Liu's own undreamed-of anxiety to get away from Yang Chou, and his desperate attempt at resistance, put a rather somber complexion upon the matter. At length he determined to go and see General Wing himself.

He put his revolver in his pocket and went out.

He was stopped at his own gate by strange pallid-faced pikemen. The *compradore* came forward and told him insolently that General Wing would not see him until the morning when they intended to extract a confession from Liu. After that, stifling a feeling of panic that suddenly swelled in his breast, Colfax stole through the dark to the rear walls of the compound, and proceeded to climb cautiously over the roofs of the godowns adjoining Faa Teh's. The streets were tightly patrolled by unfamiliar soldiers. Colfax himself was a prisoner!

In trying to avoid discovery, he rolled back from the wall, and fell between two godowns. Flinging out his arm to save himself, he caught at the framework of a window, ripping it out in his descent. When he stood up, bruised and dusty, he started to drag himself to his original position. This brought his eyes on level with the apertures he had torn in the paper windows. A night-light burning near the door of the godown into which he found himself looking, sent rays of light filtering through the cracks lighting up the interior, so that he could clearly distinguish the stock that was kept there. Every square foot of space was filled with hundreds of cases of rifles, and a battery of light field-artillery under cotton sheets. There was no mistaking it!

In that godown alone there were easily enough arms and accouterments to equip a couple of battalions. The *compradore's* wild boast was true.

Yang Chou, before Colfax's dazzled eyes, had become a strong base for the mobilization of Southern rebels in the rear of Chang's Northern line. General Wing and the *compradore* had seized Colfax's plaything and turned it into a terrible weapon. The market-places had been scenes of recruiting; the deserters dribbling in from Tientsin and Paotingfu had actually been newcomers swelling the force secretly assembling there; and only the untimely eruption of Colfax's idiotic batteries had directed attention to the sinister movement.

General Wing, realizing instantly the necessity for prompt action, had thrown a tight cordon around the town to catch the loyalists who were bound to make an attempt at flight.

Liu, apparently, had been on their list of suspects and, because of his intimate association with the principal men involved, had been the first to be taken. Colfax was still convinced that they would not harm him, though the serious nature of his situation suddenly pressed in on him with overwhelming force. Crushed, humiliated, shamed almost to the point of tears, the young American walked limply back to his room, and crawled shivering between his blankets.

Sunlight completely restored Colfax's jaunty confidence. He felt a great deal older, but he was more in the mood to meet

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whatever was coming to him. About ten o'clock a runner from the *yamen* brought word casually that if he wished to see General Wing, he could come, since they were about to question Liu.

The high-walled *yamen*-yard was crowded with a silent staring crowd of soldiers and petty officials. At one side of the yard, near the steps of the *yamen*, General Wing was seated by a table, with his staff standing about him. Every one seemed calm and self-possessed; the atmosphere of the confined space with the sun beating down upon it was mild, almost balmy; and the routine of affairs in the town just outside the walls was so entirely unaffected by the proceedings within that it hardly seemed possible that there was anything sinister in the gathering. Colfax, in fact, entered the yard arrogantly, feeling that after all the whole thing was opera bouffe.

General Wing, hardly raising his eyes, greeted him with indifference but with no suggestion of malice, as if he considered the American's silly soldier-playing had sufficiently proved him not worthy of much consideration. The *compradore* affected to be too busy to pay any attention to him at all; and the rest of his acquaintances assumed attitudes that were half-bored, half-amused. Colfax was furious, but there was nothing he could do but stand still with his arms folded, waiting for them to produce Liu.

The appearance of Liu sent a chill into Colfax's heart.

He was brought out stripped to the waist, with his hands bound in front of him, led by a rope in the hands of the executioner. This executioner was the first unreal element in the whole proceeding. He was one of those occasional gigantic specimens of perfectly proportioned men that are more often encountered in North China than in any other part of the world.

He was somewhere around seven feet in height, symmetrically built on powerful lines, but with a sullen brooding countenance. For every decapitation he carried out he received a perquisite of two Peiyang dollars, and this, added to his fees for inflicting torture, and what he could mulct from his victims in the way of blackmail or to administer opiates, comprised his whole means of subsistence.

He wore a black tunic and baggy breeches tucked into low stained black-velvet boots. A tight black turban was bound around his head, emphasizing his scowling features and the shadows in his oblique eyes. Across his back, in a scabbard of glossy pigskin, stretched his long-handled sword with an edge ground to the keenness of a razor. An outcast from society that employed him, he seemed to have grown, like a butcher, on the blood of his victims.

Sullenly ignoring the crowd, he led Liu like a dog before General Wing's table. Horrible as the sight was to Colfax, there was something grotesquely humorous in the procession; it looked for all the world like a scene from a pantomime. As the significance of it again rushed upon him, however, he stepped forward impulsively, calling out:

"General Wing, I object to this! This man is in the employ of a foreign company. If anything happens to him there will be trouble——"

The headsman swung his head sharply and looked down at Colfax with an expression that sent a thrill of horror through him. Instinctively he recoiled, and a ripple of laughter went through the crowd, General Wing said shrilly, impatiently:

"It is not your place to object. This man is a Chinese subject. He is judged by Chinese custom and law."

"He is my assistant," said Colfax doggedly, taking courage as he found words to express himself. "I am responsible for him. I will report this whole business to the American authorities!"

Looking at him angrily, and making a gesture of irritation, General Wing said:

"You yourself are a prisoner until I give you permission to leave Yang Chou! After that, who cares? But I will remind you, Colfax, you gave your word not to interfere. If we wish to kill this man, we will do so. Nothing you can do can save him!"

"Never mind me," exclaimed Liu suddenly, lifting his head. "I don't mind dying if necessary. But—go! Go with my message!"

"Silence!" yelled General Wing, scrambling to his feet and seizing his sword.

The headsman, reaching one hand suddenly behind Liu's head, clapped the other over his mouth until he was almost suffocated. The headsman's expression did not changed a shade, but as he released Liu, the latter was groggy and blood trickled from his nostrils.

"You, Colfax," continued General Wing

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threateningly, "interferer! You yourself are outside the rights of your own laws. If you continue to interfere, why should I hesitate to treat you as I do a Chinese?"

"Go!" blurted Liu.

Colfax's words choked in his throat. Weak, trembling with a growing fear, he stood silently watching, with his arms tightly folded to conceal his agitation. It was agony to remain, yet he dared not turn his back.

Wing then proceeded to question Liu, denouncing him as a spy and an irreconcilable adherent of the Manchus. Liu refused to reply. The little dark captive who had passed their gate the night before then came forward—a free man. He had been taken by the town guards on suspicion as he entered the town disguised as a coolie. Now, in his true character of a representative of the Southern forces, he denounced Liu as the son of the former *tuchun* of the province of Shensi, and an active confidant of Prince Ching. He declared he had seen Liu as an active member of the imperial party at Peking at the time of the dissolution of the new assembly.

"He is plainly a spy," declared the little man vehemently. "He is a spy watching us to trap us! He ought to die!"

"What do you say?" demanded General Wing.

"I serve my country," said Liu calmly. "It is you who are the traitors. You have no heart among you. Like rats you squeal only to be fed! If you intend to kill me—pah! Kill me!"

They stretched him face downward on a straw mat, four soldiers holding his hands and feet; and the headsman, squatting beside him with two little bamboo switches, drawn through rosin, began to lash him lightly on the bare back and shoulders. At first it seemed to Colfax a childish form of punishment; but as the swish and patter of the rapidly flecked strips of bamboo continued, and the firm muscles began to twitch and writhe spasmodically, his stomach all at once felt empty. His vivid imagination instantly comprehended the full torture of this form of punishment. The pallid skin slowly turned to a reddish hue; then to plum color. A groan burst from Liu's throat.

A clerk instantly squatted near his head, with a pad and brush in his hands.

"Confess," he urged softly.

"Go!" cried Liu in agony, sending an electric shock through Colfax.

He would not utter another sound. The whisper of the switches never ceased. After a while the skin burst. Blood spattered from the bamboo. Colfax felt an uncontrolable nausea mounting within him, and gulped desperately. Liu gave a slight moan, and fainted. Colfax, catching his breath tremulously, still dared not move.

The headsman and his assistants lifted Liu to his feet, and as he regained consciousness took him to a small four-posted scaffold, similar to the guard rails about a lamp-post, that stood in one corner of the yard. Here they stood him on a pile of thin tiles, adjusting the height so that when his body was erect they could clamp his neck in a wooden stock at the top of the scaffold. Having done this, they tied his hands behind him, and left him. Every three hours they would remove one of the tiles, until Liu confessed, or eventually died with his neck stretched by his own weight until it was a foot long.

As Colfax turned to leave the yard in a sort of stupor, General Wing intercepted him.

"Too much imagination," he said, waggling his pudgy finger around his forehead. "Observe some of the facts of life!"

Colfax's eyes were glazed.

General Wing, with a sudden access of insolence, added:

"I will warn you, Colfax, be careful! We are not children! We do not play with toys! Look at this man who will be dead tomorrow or the next day! Look at him, and be careful!"

WHEN Colfax reached his room, he closed his door softly behind him, and sinking down weakly on his knees, buried his face in his arms, and commenced to cry silently, his body racked with misery. He could feel poignantly all the suffering Liu was enduring. All his instincts tore at him to attempt a violent rescue; but he had learned his impotence. With his eyes closed he felt the presence of that black towering symbol of death, the scowling headsman; and he trembled for himself. The gush of pent-up tears relieved him and calmed him.

He sat gnawing his fingernails, trying desperately to think of some means of helping his tortured friend. He thought of the

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manager at Tientsin, looking over his shoulder with a quizzical smile, and reminding him that Liu would stand by him if he would stand by Liu. But what more could he do? Tientsin was forty miles away—and he was himself an impotent prisoner. His scattered thoughts seem to burn like blown sparks in his head. His body was scorched with the fever of excitement. His head ached throbbingly with the effort to think of some solution.

Sinking on his knees once more, this time he tried to pray.

As he sprawled upon his bed, with his eyes closed and his thoughts gradually calming under the influence of an orderly procession of ideas, all at once an inspiration came like a bubble of light bursting among his thoughts. Even as a small boy, he had often tried to figure out how he could pass among black people in disguise without his eyes betraying him. Years later, among the Chinese, he still puzzled over the problem. Now, in a flash, a solution presented itself. He might escape from Yang Chou disguised as a beggar!

As soon as it became dark, he bolted himself securely in his room and commenced recklessly to make the change. Stripping, he rubbed on his body a mixture of raw eggs and Worcestershire sauce. He saturated his sandy hair with shoe blacking, matting it in spots with condensed milk to make it more like the scabby pate of a beggar. When this had dried, he rubbed himself lightly with dust from the floor, and scratched his skin thoroughly to leave long whitish streaks. He wrapped himself round and round in some old burlap bags, gathered at the waist with a bit of straw rope, leaving his shoulders and legs bare. Around his feet he wrapped bundles of burlap. With a bowl in one hand and a stick in the other, he turned and looked at himself in his small table mirror.

The effect was startling. He was, apparently, face to face with a genuine beggar, one of the verminous diseased class that infests China, horrible whining parasites united in a resistless guild, respecting nothing, fearing nothing—yet hated and thoroughly feared by all. Colfax gave a short laugh. Only his eyes betrayed him.

At that moment there was a light tap at the door, and some one attempted to push in.

"Who's there?" cried Colfax sharply, whirling about.

"Master, what time do you want to eat?"

"Oh," said Colfax in a weary voice, but bursting into a perspiration at his narrow escape, "leave me alone! I want nothing to eat. I want to sleep."

As the footsteps receded, Colfax, listening intently, realized that more than one had come to try his door, and that he was being watched. He understood instantly that this was the psychological moment to leave his quarters. Hastily he swept away the disorder of his room to delay suspicion. Then he stuck his revolver in his waist. After a moment's hesitation he also thrust in his wrappings a sharp-edged Gurkha *kukri* which he had among his curios. This weapon had the keenness of a bowie-knife and the weight and balance of a hatchet.

His last act was to take the remains of the egg yolk and gum his eyelids together, leaving barely room to peep under one of them. This obliged him to throw his head back, completing the appearance of a blind beggar.

It was all he could do to get up courage to leave his room; but at length he slipped out and crept cautiously to the inner door of the *compradore's* office without being perceived. The sauce stung his skin; the rough burlap chafed him; and in the darkness he trembled badly. An almost overwhelming wave of loneliness and misgiving swept over him. Except for his wit, the only thing that remained between himself and torture was his revolver and the *kukri*.

He rolled over in the shadow of the counter, and came up squatting near the door. He whined as if he had just crawled within shelter of the shop, and the tremolo in his voice was perfectly natural.

The sounds of the night came to him as if very distant and in a dream—clicking counters in the office, the chant of boatmen on the canal, high, shrieking quarrelsome voices bursting forth explosively then lapsing into silence, the whine and rumble of barrow-wheels, the continued mumble of low voices, and through it all the high, shrill, breathless voice of a girl singing.

Colfax, in the shadow, quavered the beggar's chant:

"Lao-yeh! Gai woh iga chen! Lao-yeh! Lao-yeh!"

"Ah!" exclaimed a clerk irritably, rising to his feet and shuffling forward. At arm's length he dropped a few brass cash into the bowl, and persuasively urged the beggar

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out. Before the guards at the door could say anything, Colfax repeated the beggar's unappeasable cry:

"O Mandarin! Give me but a single bit! Mandarin! Mandarin!"

They let him stumble by, half-dead with fright. As he continued through the dark alleyways, calling out occasionally, beating off dogs, and whining in front of shops, his confidence came back to him. At length he reached the edge of the canal. It was crisping with ice; but he knew now he could—by swimming the narrow channel—snake out some farmer's sampan and slip off in the darkness to the safety of the floods beyond.

The swift current would sweep him eastward. He would reach Tientsin before the following evening.

All at once he realized that before he could possibly get help back to Liu, Liu would be dead.

He shuddered; then sat still with his chin buried in his chest and struggled with himself for mastery.

At midnight he was still there.

All at once he rose suddenly to his feet, and turning his back on the canal, began to make his way shakily through the deserted alley-ways toward the *yamen*.

Two stranger soldiers guarded the outer gate, meeting under the dim lantern that was suspended above it, then turning to walk to the opposite corners of the building. This was sufficient protection for the *yamen*, so deeply is fear of the law ingrained in the Chinese. The only other guard would, perhaps, be a sentry stationed within the yard itself.

Colfax edged himself into the shadow near one corner of the building, trembling violently, but now from cold and excitement rather than fear, for he had marked out his line of action and was prepared to meet the consequences. He whined softly:

"*Lao-yeh! Lao-yeh!*"

"*Kuh!*" exclaimed one of the soldiers, turning his head. "That louse has picked a cold nest!"

The other said addressing the heap of rags—

"Tortoise, there is only one mandarin in this villa—and you'll get nothing out of him!"

"Watch where they throw his body tomorrow, and maybe you can get a pair of breeches out of it!"

"Mandarin," moaned Colfax. "I have no eyes. I can not see. Give me but a single bit, O Mandarin!"

"Pah," said one laughing, "it's night—and dark. You are no worse off than others. Get out of this, you louse!"

At the same instant he lunged viciously with his bayonet. Colfax flung himself backward with a little yelp, and, stumbling, rolled into a gutter.

"Blind!" exclaimed the soldiers, and shouted with laughter.

One of them, looking for more fun, followed Colfax a few steps around the corner. In the deep shadow, the American suddenly turned, and pushing his revolver tight against the quilted tunic of the soldier, fired. The soldier, without a sound, fell dead at his feet, his gun clattering against the stone pavement.

With a sharp tingling in his arm from the electric shock of the recoil, Colfax stood perfectly still, listening, staring wide-eyed into the dark. The sensation he felt was extraordinary; it was one of exhilaration. He felt none of the misgivings or agitation of a murderer. The explosion, muffled against the quilted tunic, had not made as much noise as the impact of a foot against a football. Tense, alert, he waited. There was not a sound from the second soldier. The silence continued, grew unbearable. It occurred to Colfax that perhaps the other had gone around the building and was coming up behind him. He whirled about. There was nothing but the impenetrable blackness. At that moment he heard a smothered exclamation, and turning again, came face to face with the second soldier.

The unexpected sight of his prostrate companion who had fallen under a ray of light from the *yamen* lantern, had brought him up with a smothered squeal; and he slipped on the slimy stones and stumbled. Colfax was on him instantly, beating him frenziedly with his revolver about the head until he stopped struggling.

After stripping him of his tunic and breeches, which he himself donned, Colfax gagged him with his rags, and bound him with the rope that had been round his waist. He had killed the first man so easily that he felt tempted to dispatch the second; but he let him live. Nevertheless, with the naked *kukri* in his hand to hack Liu free from the scaffold, he slipped into the *yamen*

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yard like a leopard, which, entering a penfold, wantonly slaughters every bleating sheep within the walls.

The light from the lantern above the gate poured horizontally over the walls making a sort of luminous mist that appeared to be settling upon the yard. Beneath, the yard was smoky dark.

Listening, Colfax could hear nothing; looking carefully about him he saw nothing to stop him. He went straight to the scaffold whose four posts stood out in the glow of the lantern. As he approached he heard the labored moaning breathing of Liu. This sound brought him up with a perverse feeling of curiosity.

In his imagination he had often wondered how his own personal friends could stand torture, prolonged inexorable torture. Now, here before him was the spectacle. He checked himself for a moment and stared at the dim figure of Liu raised on its toes, half-suspended by the neck, and stared with fascination, listening with a sort of pleasant horror to the strangling sound of his breathing.

All at once the thrill of another kind of horror rippled up his spine. He felt, rather than heard, the heavy breathing of a man behind him. With a convulsive movement he turned, flinging up his knife. There, apparently suspended in the light above him was the great dark scowling face of the headsman, with the eyes like oblique holes turned unblinkingly upon him. The heavy sagging lips opened slowly; the flaring nostrils slightly twitched. Colfax's strength left him. He felt like a quivering rabbit cornered at last, facing the slavering jaws of a fox. Automatically he recoiled, and the giant with a rumbling curse flung himself violently upon the American, crashing with him to the floor, smothering him under the weight of his tremendous body.

To save himself Colfax had instinctively thrown his hands up, still clutching the *kukri*, but in the shock of the overthrow he was knocked senseless.

He came to like a man revived from drowning, strangling painfully for breath. Struggling frantically for air, he found himself still pressed down by the weight of the giant; but the weight was inert. That indomitable monster, radiating the strength of a bullock and the vitality of a leopard only a few minutes before, had rendered himself by the slip of his foot nothing but as mass of dead flesh. In falling forward his chest had encountered the point of Colfax's *kukri*, and the shock of the fall had driven the blade in clean to the hilt.

Colfax was still free.

Without further delay he released Liu, and dragged him, dazed and suffering, out of the *yamen* yard and down a dark silent alleyway. Liu gained strength as he advanced and his blood began to circulate normally; for he had been in the stock less than twelve hours and had not yet begun to endure the worst of the torture.

They reached the dim slimy edge of the canal without discovery. There they had to enter the bitterly cold water, and by swimming and floundering managed to gain the opposite side where they found a little shelter among some stacks of *kaoliang*-stalks, and wrung the water out of their clothing. When they recovered their strength a little, Colfax found a convenient sampan in which they floated across a flooded field, and reached the dark open waters beyond.

As they swung into the eastward flowing current, safe in the darkness from all pursuit, a roar of guns suddenly burst out in the town they had left behind. An increasing tumult growing faint as they swept away with the increasing current, made it obvious that the whole town knew of their escape.

"No matter," said Liu, lifting his head from his bed of *kaoliang*, as Colfax began punting desperately to gain distance; "we have only a short distance to go."

"What!" panted Colfax. "Tientsin is at least forty miles away."

"Yes," said Liu with an effort, raising himself painfully to look into the darkness ahead; "but there are soldiers from Tientsin and Peking surrounding us now. Wing and the *compradore* are already trapped. The *taotai* has received news of this conspiracy!"

"How?" demanded Colfax in astonishment.

"We suspected a conspiracy, and watched carefully. But we feared nothing—and we did nothing because we wanted to draw some of the important leaders into the trap. Three nights ago we knew positively. Then they caught me. But the message had already gone to the *taotai*."

"But how?" repeated Colfax weakly.

"Old Faa Teh himself carried it!"

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DUELING-PISTOLS

by Lewis Appleton Barker

DURING and prior to the American Revolution commissioned officers' pistols were of all kinds, shapes and sizes. They ranged from very simply furnished ones supplied by the Government, usually without sights of any kind, to privately owned ones, most expensively ornamented, which sometimes had a front sight.

When it came, however, to venturing one's life on the accuracy of a weapon fired at a distance of from ten paces to ten yards, with ample time for aiming, and the probability of a skilful opponent behind the other pistol, it was a very different matter.

Hence, from the invention of the flint-lock in France in 1650 to the general use of the metallic cartridge about 1870, no officer's armory was complete—and originally he personally owned practically all his equipment—without a pair of specially made dueling-pistols. Nor, indeed, was this confined to military men, but many civilians, men of the world, owned a case of these deadly weapons.

A set of dueling-pistols usually comprised a mahogany case, sometimes of ebony or black walnut, of about nine by twenty-one inches, three inches deep, containing two pistols, each the exact replica of the other in size, weight, make and finish, and all the accessories. The case had in the center of the cover a 2½-inch round brass name-plate, surrounded by a ring, half of which could be lifted on a hinge for the purpose of carrying it.

The adjuncts, contained in six or more sub-compartments, consisted of a wiping-rod with assorted heads and brushes that could be screwed on, a driving-rod and mallet, powder-flask—which after the introduction of percussion caps contained a receptacle for these also—bullet-mold, screw-driver—later on a cap-remover—picker, oil-can, grease-cup, and spare flints, and frequently a beautiful round box to contain bullets. The wood of all these was of the finest, being of lignum vitæ, ebony or Circassian walnut, or perhaps rosewood.

The pistols were of a size and bore that showed plainly that dueling in those days was a serious matter and no play. The form and size of a pair were as a rule very much the same, differing a little in caliber weight. They were made by hand with utmost care by skilled workmen, with attention given to form, balance, finish, but were never—as was often case in holster and pocket pistols—fancy in the way of inlaid silver scrollwork, etc.

Everything was, however, of the Besides the engraving on lock, trigger and barrel, every screw-head was cut and so threaded that the slot would exactly lengthwise with the weapon barrel was unusually thick, carefully with front and rear sights, and usually trigger, an ingenious contrivance, as to all gun-locks—invented at Mo 1543—so that the slightest pressure finger would discharge the piece, thus dering the motion produced by the pull of the ordinary trigger scarcely perceptible and insuring better aim. Such a pair from two to four hundred dollars.

The writer has such a pair, made by Manton of London, the master gunmaker his day, 1797. They are fifteen and inches in length; barrel, ten inches eighth inch in thickness; caliber .65, bore. As in nearly all dueling-pistols barrels are octagonal. They are of brown, showing the figure of the and the mountings are of steel polished and engraved. The locks are provided with safety catches and rain-water pans.

Practically the same general description might apply to two percussion-cap (1835)—the one of French, the other German manufacture—save that the barrels are not quite so thick, and are rifled—a thing unknown in dueling-pistols of the flint type. The French pair, caliber .65, made by Blanchard of Paris, are stocked, very beautifully carved, and barrels are of Damascus steel, with eighty riflings, with the numbers "1" "2" inlaid twice in gold on each barrel. hammers are quaintly fashioned into phins, the open jaws fitting over the nipple, and the tail arising to form the

The German pair, caliber .60, which a gold seal on barrel and lock-plate, "NELMKE HILDESHEIM," has eight riflings.

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THE ONE-MAN FEUD by Barry Scobee

Author of "Contrary Men," "Empty Country," etc.

THE feud between Mistah Barton Bardee—say it with a Southern drawl, Bahton Baahdee—and "Sheppie" Doe, the merry joke-ster, was closing to a finish.

The Texas evening was dryly cold, but this did not account for the hurry of "Mistah Baht"—as the soldiers called him in a mixture of fun and affection—as he journeyed from the adjutant-general's house through the artillery garrison back to his own infantry line.

He walked rapidly, and he kept strictly to the side-walk, eyes straight ahead, and there was a thrill and prickle up and down his back-bone.

Half the reason for this lay in a newly posted sign by the door of the old Six Pounder, the field-artillerymen's hang-out at the edge of the military reservation:

DOGS AND DOUGHBOYS
NOT ALLOWED

In the World War the hordes of unmilitary writers referred with flippant ease to all Yankee soldiers as 'doughboys,' but the real army knows that a doughboy is a clod-crusher, a mud-foot, an ant-masher, an infantryman. It knows also that there is traditional enmity between the arms.

An impudent doughboy had said boo to an artilleryman. The artilleryman had booed back. The two garrisons were at war, and Private Bardee, doughboy, was scheduled by his company's duty roster to pass through the field-gun garrison daily, each evening, with the department adjutant general's mail. This was his second trip.

But the blaze-up of the traditional enmity was not why Mistah Baht thrilled, or prickled, or shrank; that is, not all of the reason.

The other part of the reason was hidden away deep in the darkest corner of his heart, a fear, a terror that had him whipped, or almost whipped; a fantom horror that made it possible for a feud to exist.

The artillerymen had been laying in wait, there in the Six Pounder, for the mail-orderly's return. When Mistah Baht approached on the opposite side of the street a few big fellows sauntered out of the front door by the offensive sign and began to call tauntingly—

"Mud-foot!"

"Tramp!"

"Why don't you come over when you ain't on duty, so we can wallop you?"

Mistah Baht sent back not a word, but kept straight on as if he'd been sent for, while his flesh quivered and jerked with the apprehension that was hid down in him. He realized that as long as he kept straight ahead as if on strict duty the men would not molest him bodily. They would suppose he had mail, and would hold that inviolate, if he himself did not kick over the traces.

"Yaller! Yaller!" came the jeers. "You

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clod-crushers ain't got the guts of a yaller cur!"

"Rat! Rat-face!"

Mistah Baht's face was not ratty, after one got used to it. At a casual glance it was a weak face, but further observation revealed that it was a strong face fallen into dissolution through a hidden fear, and resentment, and other frailities of the human mind. It was a countenance across which the light of a pleasant smile never dawned. Yet it was a pathetically eager face, alert in a sort of protesting look.

"Rat-face! Scared-turkey!"

"Infantryman!" one shouted with exquisite emphasis.

Bart's—he was called "Bart" as much or more than Mistah Baht—Bart's back muscles and leg muscles were twitching as if he were being prodded. He despised himself for it. And a sudden notion seized him to go back and take a beating as a cure. It thrilled, inspired him. If he could only do it—get rid of this horror!

He took in the lay of the ground hastily. He was across the narrow street from the red-brick building, the Six Pounder. A stone's throw farther on the field-artillery garrison ended and the Q. M. corrals began and extended to the infantry garrison.

Yes, he'd try it! He could change his mind and run if he wanted to, but he'd try it, and maybe he could have this fear literally beaten out of him. Quivering all over, twitching inside and out from that terror that tugged and tore at him when bodily danger threatened, he assembled stock epithets and flung them forth!'

"Wagon-soldiers! Horse-wranglers! Stable-maids! Harness-varnishers! Baaa! Go back to your stalls and eat hay!"

The squad around the Six Pounder sounded its war-whoop, its tocsin of assembly—

"Artillerymen!"

Bart, in a frenzy of agony, stood his ground, determined to back up his inspiration, to defeat this thing within him.

A crowd came boiling out of the Six Pounder. One of the white-frosted windows was flung up and men sprang through. From the two artillery barracks in sight, from dining-rooms, and wash-rooms in the rear, from the basements, from doors and windows and alleys, men—in "browns" of the kitchen-police, and in half-attire of loafing soldiers—emerged and each one seemed to raise his voice in that call of distress and assembly that soldiers know—

"Artillerymen!"

The gang by the brick building was moving forward with one impulse. Bart's body tugged at his mind to go. He was like a man trying to stand up against the onslaught of an unseen thing in the dark, holding himself by a will rapidly flitting away.

Then, before the threat of the running men, he could hold himself no longer. And he turned and fled along the narrow sidewalk. His feet pounded, and he leaped at times, the terror which flowed through his veins jabbing him at every step like a prod.

Rocks whizzed past his head, yells rose in volume. There must have been brave drinks in the Six Pounder.

But Bart outran them, with great ease. The street along which he sped was narrow. On one side was a high board-fence, and on his right a thick, stone wall over which he could see the startled heads of horses and mules. Curiously enough, even as he ran, the smell of the dry corral assailed him.

Presently as he approached the corner of the infantry garrison and saw that the pursuit had disintegrated and that the men were going back, he slowed down to get his breath.

Having run so ignominiously he looked ahead to see who had observed. Nobody apparently. The street-car from downtown had stopped at the gate of the doughboys' portion of the big military post, and soldiers were getting off, but they were engaged in laughing at a sight that renewed the chills within the body of Mistah Baht.

The sight was Sheppie Doe, his enemy.

THOUGH it was yet daylight, Sheppie stood by the car-steps holding a lantern aloft, as if to light the men on their way. The lantern had no flame.

When the car started on, Sheppie's great, giant body bent in a bow to those he had assisted with his lightless lantern, and Mistah Baht heard him chuckle and simper.

Sheppie set out erratically, thrusting the lantern before him, holding it aloft, or near the ground, as the conditions of a rough trail on a dark night might require. A pair of sightseers looked on in amazement.

At the same time the big fellow carried in

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his left hand a common, wooden, barrel-hoop, which he rolled in short jerks, catching it again as soon as he let it loose. Suddenly the hoop darted out toward Bart, escaping Sheppie's hand, and Bart wondered if Sheppie was making the little play so as to get close.

Holding the lantern out in front of him in grotesque pantomime, Sheppie went galloping after the hoop with an expression of huge concern on his moon face. Bart saw now that the lantern was only an old rusty frame, without burner or globe.

Private Sheppie Doe was characteristically drunk.

Mistah Baht felt that he had not been seen. However, one could never tell. Sheppie, who could get as drunk on a pint of beer, or even on a drink of water some said, as on a quart of whisky, was cunning. Many times it seemed he did his drunken stunts with full knowledge of how funny or disgusting they were. The rolling of the hoop toward Bart might well have been an act of intelligence.

Bart, still quivering, slid unobtrusively across the street to avoid a meeting, hoping that he had not been seen, for the street was so narrow it would be hard to dodge the long arms. But on the heels of this hope came a chuckling.

"Oh, I see you, kid," Sheppie rumbled.

He laughed his incredibly good-natured, silly chuckle that came out roundly, as if he were emitting pool balls. No man had ever seen him angry. With Bart he was a good-natured demon when intoxicated, always threatening to seize and squeeze and twist with his monster hands and fingers.

With a ripple of mirth he dropped the lantern and hoop and came at Bart with a clawing, threatening motions of his hands. His palms, the reach of his fingers, were so prodigous that he could catch a football as other men caught baseballs.

Terror broke out afresh in Bart, as it always did in the face of this playful threat.

"—— you!" he screamed. "You stay back! I'll knife you! I'll gut you!"

The two sightseers were half-minded to run away. The garrison postmistress paused on her porch, turned to stone at the awful fear in that scream.

Sheppie chuckled in delight.

In one mad, chance-it-all plunge, Bart dived past the reaching arms and went racing through the gate of the garrison and on toward his company quarters.

MISTAH BA-A-AHT—how the Southerners drew that out in their half-mocking, yet somehow genuine liking for the lad!—Mistah Baht claimed that he had dragged a picker's sack up and down every cotton row in the state of Texas. He said this in explanation of his feet. But nobody believed him. His story only heightened the mystery.

These feet were the hardest-looking specimens of their species ever revealed to the private speculations of a shoe salesman. When Bart first enlisted the men would crowd around to see.

His own bunkie said the feet couldn't be cared for in the ordinary manner with washing-powder and a scrub-brush, they had to be dressed with a wood-rasp. They were that gnarled and calloused and scarred. A mystery!

"They've done a powe'ful sight o' walking," he'd say.

In the first days after his joining the company, with the men just getting used to the haunted look on his face, and his quick way of withdrawing from closeness to other men—one hot forenoon it was—there hove into sight at the far side of the drill-ground a spectacle that brought an incredulous hush over the men resting on the shady, front veranda after drill.

It was a huge man—though his hugeness was not then thought of—up at the top of the mild, gravely slope near headquarters, heading straight for the barrack, a soldier in uniform carrying a sack at an easy swing in his right hand, and in his left a pole, looking at that distance like a very long, bamboo fishing-rod.

The crowd watched, with varied comment. In a minute or two the big stranger came up, passing Mistah Baht sitting off by himself under the spick and span mulberry tree at the edge of the spick and span lawn. As he came he giggled and simpered. He stopped out in front and looked the soldiers over.

"Hello, heroes," he greeted, huh-huh-huhing in slow laughter.

Nobody answered.

"Go to —— then!" he said without animosity.

He stood there smiling, a great hulk with a face like a bland harvest-moon, a mouth

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wide and loose that stretched amazingly, and a pair of shoulders and arms and hands accouterments of a giant, that made the men gape. His eyes were as frank and blue as the sky.

The pole, at least twenty feet long, turned out to be a plank three inches wide, evidently from some building operation he had passed *en route* from a railway station. The airy burden of the right hand was a burlap sack lumpy with its contents.

Old dry leaves adhered to the sack, and a shift in the breeze stripped off three or four of these and scattered them across the close-cut lawn that Bob Swamp, the top-sergeant, kept immaculate. Swamp's glance followed frowningly. The lawn was the pride of his heart. Then the newcomer spoke:

"M'name's Sheppie," he announced in a good-natured rumble that shook the windows like a passing truck. "Sheppie Doe."

"Any kin to John Doe?" sneered Swamp. "What in hades do you want?"

"Naaawthing," drawled the stranger, and chuckled as the skipper's eyes glinted.

He dropped the pole and took up the bag, shaking it out as a woman shakes a pillow-case, and old tin cans, at least fifty, went slinging and bouncing out over the cement walk on to the immaculate lawn. There were more dirty leaves, and straw, and the colored lithographs from the cans.

"See what I brought ye," simpered the giant.

Swamp got to his feet.

The soldier played safety first. He hastily jerked out a long official envelope and handed it to the sergeant. Swamp drew out the enclosure and with practised eye ran through it.

"So," he observed, "you were in the Eighteenth Infantry?"

"When I wasn't in the guard-house." The man rolled out his round silly laughter.

He kicked among the empty cans.

"What you going to do with these things I brought you?" he asked.

"You're to pick them up!" shot Swamp.

Whereupon Sheppie Doe punted one of the cans over on to the next barrack porch.

He took up the pole and, catching the old burlap sack on one end, laid the sack on the top of the exquisitely trimmed mulberry tree. Then, seeing nothing else to do, he shot the pole out into the road as if it were a spear, barely missing Bart Bardee's head.

Something about Bart attracted the big fellow's attention. That strong-weak, perky, frightened face, perhaps.

"My gosh," said Sheppie Doe in a sort of awe, "you look like a cross between a jigadier-brindle and a ol' turkey-buzzard."

He went striding toward Mistah Baht, the men all looking on at the queer conduct. He went with little rumbles and bursts of laughter, and his great hands began to reach. And somehow they had in them the suggestion of twisting and gouging and *holding*.

Mistah Baht shrank away in terror, like a negro at a ghost.

"Keep back! Keep back!" he screamed.

At that scream the officer-of-the-day, crossing the drill-ground, jerked around, and a nurse-maid with her charge on Officers' Row halted with a gesture of alarm.

The giant rolled out his laughter and kept on with his clawing motions at Bart, like a good humored demon.

"Help! Hold him off!" screamed Bart again.

His terror was pitiful. The men had never witnessed such fear. Three or four non-commissioned officers made as if to start forward to help the youth, but a kind of mesmerism held them close to their tracks.

Then Bart yelled senselessly, like a man in a nightmare, and went fleeing across the drill-ground, looking neither back nor to one side.

The great hulk turned back to the crowd, and now all at once he was grotesquely sober, and weary like a child.

"Where's my bunk?" he asked Swamp. "Reckon I'll hit up the hay a while."

The sergeant, puzzled and glad enough to let the affair go at this for the time being, led the way up-stairs, and into a squad-room.

"There," said he, indicating an unoccupied, white iron cot, "that'll be yours."

Sheppie Doe flung himself down on the bare springs and was asleep at once—a great pack of flesh loose in every line.

The man was still asleep when the cook called, "Come and get it!" at noon. The first men to finish dinner and return to the big shady porch discovered Mistah Baht at the edge, forlorn as a ragged boy at Christmas, peeping in and ready to run, his eyes quick as a rat's.

"Where's that big ——?" he asked profanely.

"Sleep, up-stairs."

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"If he ever grabs hold o' me with them hands I'll kill him!" Mistah Baht swore fiercely. "Tell that bull! Tell him I said so!"

WHEN Bart arrived at his company's barrack after the encounter with the artillerymen and Sheppie Doe he was more excited than he had ever been before in the presence of his bunkie. His mouth was twisted and his eyes were jumpy.

"Oh-ho," said the bunkie knowingly, in a low voice. "Sheppie's on your trail, ain't he?"

Bart ignored this and dropped down on his bunk, to lie supinely and stare, his mind in a whir. In a minute the watchful bunkie spoke again:

"And what else, Mistah Baht? Spit it out, bo. Never saw you like this befo' in the year you've been here. You ain't that scared of Sheppie."

Bart was tempted to talk and tell things he had kept locked in his heart. Never before had a man been such a friend as this bunkie. He longed to spill over, to pour out his secrets, reveal this horror that made living a nightmare. Wanted, too, to tell about the scheme that had popped into his mind, there at the edge of the artillery garrison in the face of the threatening field-gun men; the scheme to take his dose of cure, or kill.

"I'll tell you, 'Caruso,'" he began. "I—I——"

He cringed from the thought, unable to bring himself to the words. The shame of it, the horror! Nobody, not even a bunkie, could understand. They'd call it yellow. And besides, well, he was afraid of the words because the picture they would paint fresh for him.

"Well," cajoled Caruso, as he was called because he had something of a singing-voice, or thought he had, "give us the synopsis and we'll see if we want the whole, sad story."

"The wagon-soldiers," answered Bart, getting away from the other subject, "are all stirred up like yellow-jackets."

"Did they jump you?" asked Caruso, sitting up. "Say, they'll have the 'doughs' over on 'em so quick——"

"Keep your shirt on. They didn't exactly jump me. But they may before my week's up."

"By heck, Bart, I'm sorry they're on the war-path this week, on your account. That fool Martin, he had no business starting 'em last week and egging 'em on for you to inherit this week."

"They knifed a B Company lad down at the Horse and Foot place in Jigger Town this afternoon," called out a soldier several bunks away. "Bunch of the wagon-soldiers with a dago in the crowd pulled it. One lonely dough, too."

"Getting even," said somebody else, "for what the three doughs did to the pair of drunk artilleryman the night before."

"If that gang around the Six Pounder ever get a doughboy inside," came a comment, "won't be enough left to spit on. I don't go over in that vicinity at all any more."

"Oh," said Bart, trying to throw the matter aside lightly, "they won't bother me as long as I'm carrying mail."

"Maybe, but don't build too much on it, Mistah Bahtemius Bahton Baahdee, e-s-q."

"Quit callin' Bahty names."

"Wouldn't care if they did jump me," said Bart privately to Caruso.

"Wouldn't care? Say, what'n hades's eatin' on ye?"

But Bart got away from the subject again, quickly as he could.

Other men came to sit around the cots of the two men. They liked Bart even if they did take him lightly at times. There was something genuine about him. He would do favors for his fellowmen. And too, there was something of dignity in him, a fineness back of the fear and eccentricities.

There was one thing that they did not do. They did not touch him. It was a thing that Bart could not stand.

Bart did not enter much into the gab-fest. He was preoccupied with his cure or kill planning. And his inner ear was tuned for the heavy approach of Sheppie Doe. Once a restless, lolling soldier got an arm across him. Bart slid away like a startled cat.

"Don't touch me!" he flared. "Don't touch me!"

"Oh ——!" scoffed the man, but got back.

Then Sheppie wallowed into the room, looking like a Kadiak bear.

"Ho-ho-ho!" he began in his round simper.

He no longer had the lantern or the hoop, but he had his hands, the great fingered

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monstrosities that he began to wiggle claw-like up in front of his face as he made for Mistah Baht's cot.

This was the signal for Bart to go leaping over bunks and lockers to get out of the way. But a new thought was working tonight. He lay still. The other men got back, not knowing what to expect.

Bart's thought was to let Sheppie get hold of him—the kill or cure. He tried to hold steadfast, but his body began to twitch, and in the end he failed. Yet he didn't go leaping over the bunks. Instead, in a new and unexpected ferocity he sprang, when his will would hold him no longer under the coming fingers, to his wall locker and jerked out his bayonet.

"Stay back!" he yelled. "I've fooled long enough! —— you, I'll kill you!"

"Ho-ho-ho," simpered Sheppie.

Bart acted. Without further warning his arm flashed back and the bayonet flashed out, thrown with all his wiry might.

Sheppie had two faces, the simpering one and a sober one. But the sober face was more of a comedy than the other, for it was serious to grotesqueness. And it became that now, as the bright bayonet hissed by, carrying out a clean, round hole in a window pane.

New thoughts *were* at work in Bart. Ordinarily he would have run now, but this time he leaped upon the hulking bear like a squalling cat. Yet, like the maddened feline that leaps upon a dog, and yowls and claws once, and leaps off again in terror at the contact, Bart leaped away, unable to hold himself to the conflict, and escaped through the door.

SHEPPIE DOE had never bothered when Bart was asleep in the depths of the night. There are rules and regulations against disturbing a squad-room full of sleeping men. A soldier is entitled to his bunk and his sleep, and going by the rule of do unto others as you would be done by, one man seldom awakened another maliciously.

It may have been that the thrown bayonet got on Sheppie's thought. He may have decided that it was better for his own safety to break down Bart's fear and resistance at once. Whatever it was that stirred him to action, the result was manifest in the small hours of the night.

The squad-room, the barrack, and adjoining barracks, were startled by a squalling as of a rabbit caught in a snare.

When the squad-room sergeant twisted on a light, they beheld Sheppie out in the middle of the floor with Bart held aloft, helpless on those vast hands, while the fingers gouged and tickled and punched and squeezed and Bart screamed and struggled.

Men leaped around the pair, and by their numbers weighted the giant down and pulled Mistah Baht away. Sheppie was gurgling his round laughter. Bart jumped through an open window and disappeared into the cold night.

Sheppie was court-martialed the next day and fined two months' pay, for unmilitary conduct. But this was no salve to Bart, who was timorous with dread that Sheppie would do the same thing again, now that he had tried it once. The day was a misery for him. His face was on the twist most of the time, and his eyes quick and fearful.

As evening drew on and the time came for him to call at the post office for the adjutant general's mail, Mistah Baht was on the uneasy seat more than ever. This thing of a late mail delivery was a bit of accommodation demanded by a colonel who believed that he was a very busy man. Bart was swayed between resentment and hope and fear.

If he could only stand up and take a beating!

The shrewd-eyed Caruso saw and, if he did not understand, at least was sympathetic.

"I'll go along," he volunteered finally out of the blue, "when you take his nibs' mail over."

Bart shook his head.

"No use," he said. "Those horses could beat us both up as easy as me by myself."

"Get the gang out then."

"Nope. Fact is, Caruso—" Bart began to be agitated—"I've a notion to invite a thrashing."

"Invite it? What'n Sam Hill you talking about?"

"—oh, blast it, don't bother me."

Bart did not want any interference in whatever he should decide on. He turned the subject to another angle of the plan he had in mind.

"Loan me some of your letters," he asked.

"Loan you some of my letters!" Caruso

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gaped, staring. "I will like ——! What do you want of 'em?"

"Does a bunkie have to tell a bunkie?"

Caruso grunted and went to his foot-locker.

"You can take the letters out," said Bart. "All I want is the envy-lopes."

"Why don't you use your own?" grouched Caruso.

But he knew why. Bart had only one letter. It was from an oil stock salesman and began, "My dear friend." When the other boys got a lot of mail Mistah Baht would get out his letter and pretend it was new, and linger over that, "My dear friend."

So knowing this, Caruso found a dozen or so envelopes for his bunkie.

AGAIN in the crisp of the evening the gang at the Six Pounder lay in wait. Mistah Baht, like a good soldier, looked neither to the right nor to the left, but kept straight ahead with his handful of mail carried so that it would be certain to show. Only a few cat-calls were flung across at him as he went toward the adjutant general's house.

But returning, life took on a different aspect for Mistah Baht. The officer had given him no mail. He was free to do as he pleased.

And he pleased to take a beating at the hands of the wagon-soldiers. A beating-up once and maybe the ice would be broken, the bogey slain, so that he would not be always shrinking and always afraid of the menace of Sheppie Doe. These things he wished above all things.

He walked awkwardly. His feet hurt. They seemed tender, as they did in high excitement.

The artillerymen were expectant. Some were out perched on the porch railings, and two or three asked good-humoredly why he hadn't brought along a few friends for some real fun. They waited for him to make a break. One man in a knot of others barked out—

"Boo!"

"Don't do that," warned another mock-seriously. "You might scare a doughboy or something."

Mistah Baht's stomach was bouncing. He was like a person already stage-frightened waiting to go on stage. But in a minute he would defy them, invite their attack, and——

His abdominal muscles began to jerk. His feet hurt.

The Six Pounder was looming close. Men were sauntering from its two black doors. One had something white in his hands. Eggs! Another picked up stones. They began to call out—

"Foot racer!"

"You sho' did disappear last night!"

"Why didn't ya bring your regiment so we could have a whole bite."

"Tramp!"

A rock flashed by, safely as yet, on ahead of him.

"Shot across your bow!" yelled a big fellow.

"Ship ahoy!"

Bart stopped. The time was at hand. He was jerking so that one heel tapped the side-walk. His feet pained desperately.

The thought flashed that these men were like wolves and he the prey. And on the heels of this came the wish that Sheppie Doe were here to be leaped upon and beaten, beaten down until he would never again harass and torment.

The men began to boo and baa and cat-call. Bart's face was twitching. He drew something from an inside pocket, keeping it hidden, and at the same time saying that he mustn't make use of it.

All at once, like a man finally deciding to leap and have it over with, Bart shouted out:

"Horses! Wagon-soldiers!"

But it was only a thick squawk. The men seemed not to hear or understand. But it was Bart's best—his all—his limit. He could not hold himself to the contact.

He raised his right hand, and displayed the pack of envelopes he had borrowed from his bunkie.

It was his passport. Yowling their disgust the artillerymen let him go. And he went—jerking, shrinking—despising himself.

SHEPPIE DOE under the wolves, beaten down, beaten until he could torment no more. Bart's mind was in a whirl about this as he hot-footed it back to quarters.

Sheppie sprawled on his cot, his face comically sober and utterly blank. Bart knew

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that if the giant had a half-dollar he would be out seeking a drink.

As Bart went to his own cot—a soldier's cot is his castle, his sanctuary, his inner closet—Caruso laid down a magazine and gave his bunkie the inquiring eye.

"What's the matter, Mistah Baht, ol'-timer?" he asked, rising to an elbow. "You look like you'd been sucked into a cotton-gin."

"Loan me fifty cents, Caruso!"

"Loan you—say, all I hear from you is loan, loan. Loan you my letters, loan you fifty cents. What do you think I am, a charity?"

"Come on. You got a dollar and a quarter in your locker from last pay-day."

Caruso relented.

"Sure, I'll loan you it; whole dollar and two-bits if you need that much. What's matter, ol'-timer? If you want to lick somebody I'll stand behind you till you're beat up, though I ain't nothing but a common bugler——"

"Aw, cut the joshing. I don't feel like it."

"But a bugler sometimes has noive. Say, what's the rumpus, anyhow, kiddo? Spit it out!"

"Me, I'm a failure," whispered Bart. "A coward. I ain't worth a hang."

"Well, I ain't either. Look at me, ought to be in the Boston sympathy orchestra instead o' buglin' you babies outa bed of mornings."

"But me, I——"

Bart covered his face with his hands. Caruso got over to his bunk and leaned across the suffering lad.

"Don't touch me, don't touch me!" flared Bart. "Oh, Caruso, I'm sorry. I don't mean it. Listen, I've got a ha'nt."

"Spill if you want to, Bart. Weep. I won't tell it on ye. You'll feel better if you talk it outa yuh."

"Listen, Caruso, I ain't never told a living soul——"

"Cut loose now then, and I'll analyze yuh and do you some good. Feller ought to do that much for his bunkie."

"I ain't always been like this, a wreck o' quiverin' muscles. My feet, three years ago—listen:

"I was pickin' cotton. Three tough birds come and got a job. They couldn't pick cotton for sour apples. What they was there for made us kinda sneakin' curious. One was called Griko and another Bill, and then there was a little feller like me. One evening about sun-down they were at the end of the row, a haggling between themselves, with their heads together. I kept working up to 'em, a carrying my cotton sack easy so they couldn't hear it drag, and I got pretty close, so that when I stood up I could see down between them what they had.

"Money, paper, green and yellow. It was in three piles, and Griko had the biggest one, and they were quarreling about the divvy.

"I sit down quick, but they look around, and Griko stuffs the money into his cotton sack. 'Bout that time the boss calls us to the wagon to weigh in, but these three fellows have got such a little bit that the boss won't weigh it, and he takes their bags and throws them in a heap and tells them to git; that he won't have 'em mussing up the rows for good pickers any more.

"They didn't like to go, and Griko had a hard eye on that sack. But the boss told 'em to be on their way. Us pickers was standing around, white men, and the niggers back a little way, and a word from Mister Buttrell would of set the gang on to them three, and they could see it, and they went off across the field toward town.

"I watched 'em, and when they got over by the fence and the railroad they stopped and laid down in the weeds.

"Me and my two buddies lived in a tent in the field. We built a fire out on the ground and started in to get supper. And dark come on. As soon as I couldn't any longer see the wagon, nor the fence where the men laid, I slipped off and went to that sack and got the money, and I took it and hid it under a rock in the middle of the field—a big rock like a hand-car, where the colored folks always ate their lunch, if they was around close, and all tramped down around it."

"How much was there?" asked Caruso tensely.

"I didn't count it."

"You didn't get it back?"

"When I had it hid good I went back to my two buddies. They'd ate and were just starting to town, and they went, with me eating and promising to go on later. They'd hardly got out of hearing when Griko and the two others lit in on me.

" 'What'd you do with it?' says Griko.

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"I pertended ignerance, o' course. They said they'd seen me. They cussed and tore, and finally they offered to divvy if I'd tell where it was. But I wouldn't risk them for anything. I thought maybe they'd be a reward. Then all at once, when Griko spoke, they grabbed me——"

Bart shivered and cringed and shoved his face down in the pillow.

"——!" he whined, muffled so the other men around the room would not hear. "They roasted my feet in the fire."

Caruso grunted as if he had been thumbed by Sheppie Dow in the ribs.

"Why didn't you tell 'em where the stuff was?" he demanded.

"I did, almost as quick as they first stuffed my heels down on the coals and pushed. And they all up and run to the rock. I ought to of got away then, but I didn't know. The stuff wasn't there. Somebody had seen me and took it, I reckon.

"They said I was lying, and they roasted me feet. I told 'em under the pile of sacks so they would all run there and I could make my get-away, but they took me along, every step a torture, and when they didn't find it they carried me back and roasted me some more.

"They held me by the throat, and gouged me in the ribs, and held me, *held me with a thousand hands*——"

"Easy, easy," cautioned Caruso. "You're getting loud. They ain't here now."

"—and held me and I couldn't twist away, and I could smell my flesh a-burning, and them hands a holding, and I couldn't yell because they held my throat, and I couldn't call for help.

"When they finally kicked me aside and ran, I yelled. At first I knew I was yelling, and I saw the cotton pickers from the cabins and the colored folks a coming through the rows with lanterns, and they got their hands on me and held me more and more, and I yelled and yelled till they gagged me, though I didn't know anything about it then.

"I come to in a hospital six weeks later, and I couldn't have anybody touch me, couldn't stand it."

Bart lay panting as if he had run a race.

"But hands touching you won't hurt," said Caruso in a minute.

"I know it but I don't *feel* it. Some good folks told me, 'Break the ice, let hands touch you, and scramble you to see that they won't hurt nothing. Try it, trusting in God, and see.' But I ain't got the guts."

"Let Sheppie get hold of you, when you're awake."

Bart sat up, remembering.

"Let me have that fifty cents. I ain't got the nerve to cure myself, but I'm going to put that big bear where he'll let me be for a while."

THE giant showed only slight surprize when Mistah Baht seated himself on the adjacent cot. Bart had done the same thing before in a timid effort to make friends with Sheppie, for Bart was the sort of person to make friends with anybody rather than to have enemies. And besides, though he had not actually admitted it, he liked Sheppie Doe, for he felt that the great simpleton meant ill for no man. Sometimes his heart really warmed to the thought that after all Sheppie was a good fellow, and would make a reliable friend.

"You ain't drunk tonight," observed Bart as he sat down.

"Ain't got the mon," replied Sheppie. "Loan me four bits, kiddo, till pay-day."

His asking and Bart's having was no coincidence, for Sheppie asked every man for a four-bit loan. It was a habit of his. But Sheppie's moon face showed tremendous surprize when Bart flipped him a half-dollar.

The big fellow was as frank and simple in showing surprize as in all else that he did. He never seemed to try to hide any feeling. This often shamed Bart when he found himself thinking that Sheppie's queer antics when drunk were sham and pretense, or that the name of Sheppie Doe was a silly subterfuge of some sort. Sometimes it seemed that Sheppie was too simple for the average mind to comprehend, and thus appeared complex.

The inebriate sat up and began to wrap on his leggings. Already he was chuckling his round laughter.

"You sho' one white man, kid," he declared. "Now where's my hat?"

In a moment he was gone.

MISTAH BAHT stood in the shadow of a telephone pole and watched Sheppie tack along the street close to the garrison entrance. It was the chuckler's hunch this time to pitch

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and roll rather than to do something else, like chasing a hoop. Bart deliberately, though trembling, left the shadow and got himself in front of the giant. Sheppie did not seem to see, but he spoke:

"Don't get under my feet, kiddo. I'm a elephant."

Bart led off into the narrow roadway that went straight past the corrals to the artillery garrison. In a moment it seemed that Sheppie became suspicious of this, for there was a sort of catch in his round laughter. But Sheppie liked an audience and it must have seemed to him that if he kept his audience of one he would have to follow, so he kept rolling on.

Every now and then he would run forward, clumsily clawing the air as a threat to Bart.

It began to look like success. Bart's hope was to toll his enemy to the door of the Six Pounder and heave a rock through the window to attract attention. Then he would leave his victim to the wagon-soldiers' mercy.

Hope beat high. He would allow himself to think of but one thing, the elimination of the constant threat that Sheppie constituted. He felt that he would scarcely sleep again so long as Sheppie was free to seize him in the night. He shuddered at the memory.

The elimination of Sheppie Doel Bart remembered the knifing of a doughboy by the artillerymen the day before. He hoped the men in the Six Pounder were properly equipped, and yet he shuddered at the thought.

Then he discovered that Sheppie was not following. He ran back a little way, but no Sheppie. Thinking he might have passed him in the darkness, he searched back toward the Six Pounder, getting so near he could hear ribald singing in the joint. But Sheppie was not there.

Bart was shaken, his world was turned over again. He began to run toward the Six Pounder.

By ——, he'd have it out. He'd take his beating up and see if it would break his fear. He'd let them send him close to the borderline, or across, if they chose, but he'd break the thing of horror.

Through the sheer impetus of his start he kept on, not even slowing when the white-frosted windows seemed close, and the loud laughter of men was a threat right at hand.

Bart began to sob. He got to the front door. Strength almost gone he flung himself against it, leaning or hanging there with outspread arms like a man crucified.

"It ain't a fight between me and Sheppie," he thought in a flash of illumination. "It's a one-man fight—me—myself."

His legs gave way. He slid down to his knees, still sobbing, determined to go on. Then the noise inside fell away to silence. Bart groped for the door latch. His fingers failed to touch it, and in that instant, because of so slight a thing, panic seized him in a new way, and he could not go on. He got up and stumbled off into the darkness.

The high, board fence was close by. He got to it and slumped down in a little cowering heap, trembling all over.

"One-man fight," he thought, "and I lose."

Men burst from the black door abruptly. In the bar of light, and in the glow through the painted windows, Bart, watching fascinatedly, saw them look around, striking matches, flashing a pocket-lamp. One of them spoke out protestingly:

"But I heard a woman. Crying. Think I can't tell a skirt crying?"

They went back inside.

Almost at once another figure came feeling along the board fence. Bart held breathless. Then a puzzled voice pondered aloud—

"Did that little wart go in there?"

Sheppie! At once he went striding to the Six Pounder's door. He paused an instant then flung the door open and entered.

The noise, the laughter, and the hum of talk stopped short off. Somebody within cursed once. An instant more, and then the outbreak.

A fight started. A white-painted window pane burst out. There was a sharp cry, and Sheppie's rolling laughter. Minutes passed—it seemed to breathless Bart.

The thought began to beat in on the lad that he had enticed Sheppie to his killing. And Sheppie had gone in because he thought Bart was in there! Gone to his assistance! Old laughing Sheppie.

Bart was on the point of getting up when another man ran past the corner of the board fence. He ran half the distance to the Six Pounder, paused, listened, as his dim

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silhouette showed, then turned and ran back the way he had come at full speed.

"Looks like Caruso," thought Bart wonderingly.

Bart got up. He forgot himself. To help Sheppie was his thought. He ran to the open door of the joint, rushed in. The white-aproned man behind the bar flung a bottle. Bart dodged and the glass smashed against the wall.

Sheppie Doe picked up a man in both hands, like a chunk of wood, and threw him into a bank of men who were scrambling, cursing, reaching, and hurling things. Bart saw a bare knife-blade.

The giant leaped over the bar with astonishing agility, snatched a baseball bat that the proprietor was raising, and flung the man himself over the bar.

Bart had ducked to the end of the wooden-counter that answered for the bar. Now he sprang to Sheppie's heels and got the butt-end of a pool cue from a shelf under the bar.

Then Sheppie did a wonderous thing. He braced himself against that wooden counter and, grunting, swung it around, sweeping men before it, so that he cleared a way to the side-door, and through that door he and Bart rushed to the outer night. Bart shouted up at Sheppie:

"I'm with you, kid! Let's clean 'em!"

Sheppie did not hesitate a second. He grabbed Bart up and held him high over his head and gouged and twisted and shook. Bart squealed, once, and then held silent.

"You afraid? You afraid now?" bellowed Sheppie.

But the men were pouring out of the door now, and around the corner, shouting:

"Artillerymen! Artillerymen! Doughboys!"

Sheppie settled Bart down astride his neck. Bart gripped Sheppie's hair with his left hand and began wielding the butt end of the pool cue.

"Whoopie!" shouted Sheppie. "Clean 'em out!"

He laughed like a wild man, and Bart shouted like a demon on a debauch of noise.

Somebody turned on the porch lights of the barracks across the street, lighting the scene. Men were to be seen then running from the barracks and along the street. And it seemed that all of them were shouting one thing, that tocsin of the arm—

"Artillerymen!"

"Ho-ho-ho!" roared Sheppie. "Pity the poor sailors on a night like this!"

And with his swinging of the ball bat and Bart's swinging of the other club they had a little space cleared around them.

Then there came a sound that made Sheppie and Mistah Baht stop short off. The far-away note of a bugle. The artillerymen caught it too, and paused in frozen attitudes. The men back there coming into the fray, they paused too, to listen.

The raucous, shrilling, thrilling, trumpet-call to instant duty!

It went its full length, and stopped. The artillerymen instinctively turned toward their own guard-house and headquarters, expecting to hear the call for them.

An instant's silence, then the trumpeting came again, but still in the infantry post.

"The call to arms!" bellowed Sheppie.

With Bart astride his neck, he broke through the ring of men around them, men now with lowered arms. And he galloped up the street like a horse.

"A trick!" shouted a wagon-soldier.

And stones and clubs and curses sailed after the retreating "doughs" but missed their marks.

WHEN Sheppie got out of the danger fringe he set Bart down, without ever breaking his gallop, and holding the smaller man's hand they raced to the infantry garrison.

They turned in at the gate. On ahead by the white flagstaff, under the high light that illuminated a wide space, the whole regiment was bunched. Officers could be seen up on the buttresses of the staff, their high-front caps marking them plainly.

At the dark alley-mouth, between the headquarters building and the officers' bachelor quarters, Sheppie and Bart paused to look and see whether it were up to them to go on or not. And when they stopped, somebody ran back into the alley. And there was a bugle dropped and snatched up again, the sounds making it as plain as if they had seen.

"One thing sure," panted Sheppie, "we didn't have anything to do with that call to arms. No sense in us standing here like we're guilty."

He picked up Bart and sat him astride his neck again. Then he went galloping into the press of the silent, gaping regiment.

A way opened. He carried his charge

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up to the very center, where the officers stood. The colonel's voice shot out sharply.

"You know anything about that call to arms?"

"No," simpered Sheppie. "Do you?"

"Why, you men are cut and bloody!" exclaimed the colonel. "Are you hurt?"

He was looking up at Bart.

"Hurt?" sang out Bart. "I should say not!"

He slid down to the ground and grinned back up at Sheppie from a face that had lost its fear.

WHERE RATS WERE POPULAR

by John L. Considine

HOWEVER unpopular the rat might be above ground, he was never molested in the precious-metal mines of Virginia City or Gold Hill, Nevada. The lower levels of those deeps were literally alive with the long-tailed rodents.

Their immunity from harm rendered them tame and even saucy. They fared sumptuously on the fragments left from the miners' lunches—for those miners lived well—and even in this respect were of service, acting as scavengers for the removal of scraps of meat and other food which otherwise would have caused bad odors to arise.

Because of the great heat, with a temperature rising often to as high as 140 degrees in the lower levels, the decay of the smallest thing in those mines could not be endured. Was a rat killed by accident, it had to be sent up out of the mine without delay. Was a small piece of cotton burned in a drift, the miners would smell it throughout the level. And the burning of a splinter of pine would have caused a panic and a stampede, as they would have thought the timbers of the mine were on fire. Their sense of smell, ordinary enough on top, displayed an incredible keenness underground.

Perhaps a reason more important than any other for the extraordinary tolerance accorded by the miners to the elsewhere despised rodents lay in the fact that, when a great cave-in of rock was about to occur in a mine, the rats gave the miners their first warnings. The animals became very uneasy and were to be seen scampering about at unwonted times and in unusual places.

The rats always were the first to discover that the earth was settling and set out in search of a place of safety. It was supposed that the waste-rock and timbers, in settling, pinched them in their usual holes and haunts and so forced them to go forth in quest of new quarters in order to avoid being crushed to death.

They were unbelievably numerous. A fire in a mine meant a holocaust of rats. They perished by the thousand. The poisonous gases generated penetrated to every part of the levels, and not a rat was left alive. Sometimes after one of those fires they were gathered up from the floors by bushels.

In trying to jump across the main shaft a rat sometimes miscalculated the distance and fell to the bottom. A rat falling a thousand feet and landing on a miner's head would be sure to knock him down. The rat was killed of course, exploding as he struck.

But the heaviest animal excursion ever staged there might be correctly characterized as a drop in beef. A teamster, stopping at noon two or three miles from the place, unhitched eight yoke of oxen from his wagon to let them graze about among the sagebrush while he was eating his dinner. Although unhitched, they were fastened together in a string by a heavy log-chain which passed through their several yokes.

The teamster, seated on his wagon eating, was astounded to see his entire team of cattle, then distant about one hundred yards, suddenly disappear into the ground. In grazing about, they had reached an abandoned shaft, around which those in the lead had passed, then, moving forward, had so straightened the line as to pull a middle yoke into the mouth of the shaft. All then followed, going down like links of sausage. The shaft was three hundred feet deep, and although their carcasses would have been of some value as beef, the teamster could not recover them because of a lack of hoisting-apparatus.

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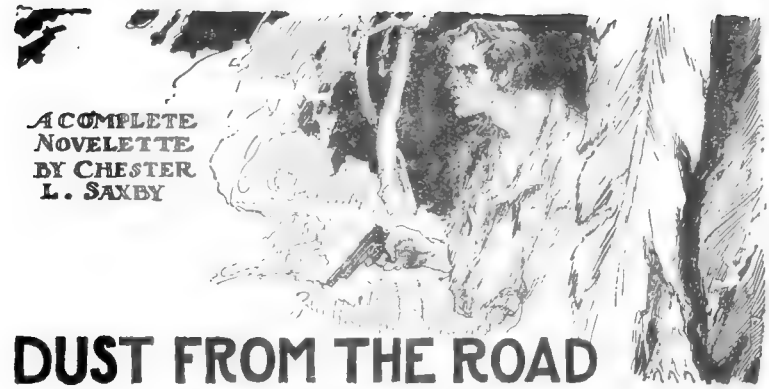

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE BY CHESTER L. SAXBY

DUST FROM THE ROAD

Author of "Pearls of Great Price," "The Streak," etc.

THE white colony of Nahi welcomed Peter Messenger. It was dreary life the island afforded—a minimum of work and a maximum of time, inasmuch as the whites had learned how poorly the two agreed. Altogether a hopeless situation this made, because those who would conserve time found it robbed of value. It seemed there was just so much of life, and one could either gulp it straight and have done, or sip a diluted concoction that tasted flat but was non-injurious. Peter's choice appeared to be the former; consequently he became an interesting person at once. With one accord the score of exiles on Nahi rendered homage of appreciation.

Peter dropped off a tramp schooner without cards or letters. He had no money and few clothes, was easy to know, and knew a little of everything. In fact, in thirty years he had seen most of the world and many varieties of humanity, and had opinions that did not make him opinionated. He possessed a passable education, spoke four foreign languages as well and as poorly as he spoke English, was a master mechanic and a qualified mate in sail. He brought general news from home and from Singapore and from Buenos Aires—it made no difference.

He could by no means be termed handsome, yet his grin was fresh and his manner vivid. The seven women accepted him as readily as anybody; the dozen male sojourners came out of their palm-shade retirement to shake hands with him, and Chief Magistrate McMory tendered him the keys of the island.

McMory lent a pompous dignity to every such occasion. He was a large man with a lust for formal speech—which invariably proved fickle to his trust.

"Mr. Messenger, you are grateful to us. Allow me to assure you that this fragment of the Circassian race welcomes you to the brandishments of this opal isle. In lieu of my present recumbency of the chief office here I tender fecilitations."

To which Peter replied soberly, "Blast be the tie that binds," and stepped up to loosen McMory's scarf that seemed to be making the florid face purple.

Cliff Rudd took to Peter from that moment. Cliff was a youthful twenty-six and the scion of aristocracy. His father owned a fleet of four vessels that did business in the Pacific, and had sent Cliff to learn the eastern end of the trade. It was a hard apprenticeship; the boy tingled with ambition and could only mark time, for in a week he had explored all Nahi and watched both harvesting and planting in the cocoanut groves, had witnessed pearling in neighboring lagoons and the fishing and curing of *bêche-de-mer*. There remained twenty-five weeks of the six months' term to serve, and a load of homesickness for life that moved faster than three miles an hour. Mildred McMory was a wonderful girl, but even to a

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man vaguely in love such a measuring-worm existence was pitiless. He met Peter with politely restrained joy.

"I wish," he said, "you'd stay with me, if you don't mind."

The off-hand invitation must have surprized him as much as it did the others, for he flushed to the roots of his hair. It wasn't the thing, of course; he should have waited. But nothing was really proper in Nahi, and there was no hotel, and he was lonely for somebody his own age.

"I've lots of room in the shack. It would be quite a favor."

Peter, with a five days' growth on his chin, a rather soiled canvas suit on his back—torn a little here and there (both suit and back) from hard work—and smelling of tar and resin and other things, looked into Cliff's handsome face, then at Cliff's tailored clothes, then back at the face again.

"God rest you merry, gentleman!" he said. "Let nothing you dismay—not even me!" and thrust out his calloused hand. "You'll have to charge it, though."

After the introductions they went by a drowsing, breezeless path to the boy's place on a promontory where the trade wind blew. Over tall glasses they sat and talked. Peter stretched out to a glorious rest from toil.

"Tramping is a nasty business," he asserted. "I hate most any kind of work, but hard work I hate most, matey. I think I'll like it here first class. Got to find something to do, of course, but it ain't the same as crew-driving from the looks of the folks. You'll let me pay my rent."

"There's no rent in Nahi," smiled Cliff. "Have another glass?"

"It sure scratches my stomach. Thanks." Their eyes met. "You don't know about me, Rudd. You ought to be asking. I may be a white-washed sepulcher. I guess I am. Don't cut much of a figure. Don't ever expect to, what's more. I'm a roadman; 'dust from the road,' as that poet Barnes says. I like it, like to scuff it up with my feet.

"No harm; it settles again. Expect to be the road myself some day when I can't drag any farther—that's the way Barnes puts it. Dust to dust and not a thing lost. Earth-dust and sea-dust—it's all pleasant. In other words, I'm a bum. On the other hand, your name's Rudd—a short name; four letters in it worth a hundred thousand apiece. Hard to see where I come in there. Excuse my saying so."

Cliff evaded politely:

"I'll bet you've seen a lot. Wish I had the chance."

"It's not where I'm going, but where I've come from," Peter caught him up. "Look here, I like you, and this Scotch stuff loosens me considerably. I'd just as soon tell you I've pounded the road, sea-road and all, for quite a time, if you want to know it, to find somebody I don't exactly love. And I guess—I guess he's here on Nahi. It's a fair place to hide, all right; but the world's pretty small after all. And I'm pretty mad, friend Rudd. I'm pretty mad. I'm even carrying a gun." He showed it, twirling it on his finger. "Now you know about *me*."

Cliff smiled eagerly. "I knew you'd have a whale of a yarn to spin. As to me, I'm just here gnawing my heart out for no good reason. I'm tossing away six months of my life with shipping going down and down and down. My father's ships aren't earning their salt, you know. Maybe dad sees what's coming, and maybe he doesn't. When the bottom drops out, it'll be too late for either of us.

"While he's losing all he's made I ought to be back home getting busy, building up something we can turn to. I'm marooned; that's the word for it. I'm stuck out here with a nightmare. Why, by November dad won't even be able to *sell* the boats. Think of that! Then what will he do?"

Cliff's voice grew shrill. Spots of nervous excitement crept into his cheeks.

"I don't know—I don't know. It might kill him. All his money's tied up in the boats. I want to sell out and start a bank in a small town—no worry, no uncertainty; a nice clean business. I wish to God I——"

He broke off. The glass in his hand was shaking. He set it down.

"I beg your pardon! I've been bottled up so long. Didn't mean to bother you." He slumped back apologetically.

"Hm!" Peter regarded him thoughtfully. "Trouble is, you're lonesome."

"Lonesome?" Cliff laughed on a high key. "You have good eyesight."

"I have. That pretty girl I just met—she seemed interested in you."

Cliff flushed. "Mildred McMory would make any man happy."

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"Then why be lonesome, Rudd? There's the right start for you."

"I've just told you. Don't you see what a rotter——"

"You want me to stay then," Peter interrupted. "You're short on friends."

"I'm afraid I am. The only one I feel I can talk to is Marinnis, a planter about five miles inland. You'll like Marinnis, and he's been a life-saver to me, I can tell you. He's sterling. He'll discuss things by the hour and try to scheme and figure. He'd even wreck a ship for me so I could have the insurance—do it with his own hands, he said. Of course he knows I'd never do that, but in a hundred different ways he's been whiter than I deserve. I hope some day I can pay it back."

A strange look had come over Peter's face. His eyes bulged as if he was about to choke. He stared and stared. Cliff's simple narrative, for some reason, he was finding hard to swallow. And after a stark silence he burst out laughing.

"A wrecker, is he? Well, that's interesting to know."

"Don't misunderstand," Cliff hastened to add. "But it shows what he's made of. He's all-wool. Last week he offered me ten thousand dollars on my note—to tide over. And he's not making much. It's poor soil even for cocoanuts."

"I guess," said Peter slowly, "you need me. I'd better figure to stay for awhile—till the itch in my feet gets too bad. But I've got to find something to do. I'm too fidgetty sitting still. Besides, I pay my way wherever I go, Rudd."

"No—no. This is a matter beyond you and me, Messenger. It's in the hundreds of thousands. But—Lord! I'd be tickled to death to have you stay!" Cliff was on his feet in delight. "Having you here—that's all I'd ask."

"'My face is my fortune,' Peter quoted solemnly. Instantly his eyes clouded. "Why not? It's worth eight thousand dollars to somebody."

"Life insurance? What do we care what we're worth dead?"

"Dead or alive, they'd pay the same." But Peter was talking to himself. He roused to say, "You take me out to Marinnis's place and help me get a job with him. On that arrangement I'll stay. I'll manage to get back and forth. I want to see your friend, Rudd. He'd take your recommendation. Yes, the more I think of it, the better that suits me. Here! Grab your glass, and we'll have a toast to a new partnership. Don't know what use we can make of it, but we'll call it a partnership in life."

Cliff's enthusiasm mounted.

"Let's make it in the fine old way: 'To the death!' I like that. It sounds big. And we'll clink glasses to bind it."

Peter stood up. The glasses clinked. "To the death!" he said and drank.

McMORY was enlisted to carry them out to call on Marinnis because McMory owned a donkey-cart. Furthermore, it appeared, he, too, was an ardent believer in Marinnis. Peter remembered that later. Just then he was busy hanging on. The road was tortuous and unspeakably bad. But McMory spoke anyway, talked interminably, talked uselessly and without any point. The other two paid little attention——

"—here on the frontier of Christiandom where East meets West and never the twain shall part—all the manifolded problems of development—ugh! There we go! Miserable roads! Inexecrable! I hope you're comfortable—you're on the feet of the gods, Messenger, with men like Rudd here—Rudd's the salt of the earth—yes, sir, I say it in his presence. He's our *sinner qui none;* a most sublimated host besides being heir presumptuous to a big trading house—with one like Marinnis to see ahead and organize for the future, to take time by the fetlock—a man of vision— Look out! Hold on! Hold on; we're nearly out of it. We might have taken off a wheel then."

Peter remarked:

"It's easy to get into a rut. Even Marinnis seems to."

"I constantly deploy the state of travel in my reports, but it does no good," McMory complained, perspiring heavily. "They would have us macademize—macademize, sir, with phos—with rock that—with no rock at all—or I mean with no men——"

Peter asked indifferently, "What rock did you say?" and McMory glanced at him, mumbled something, and called attention to the sea coming into view. Peter did not repeat his question, but he chuckled to himself.

Shortly McMory waved a fat hand.

"We are at this very junction transversing

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Marinnis's domains. And yonder at his own hearth door stands the husbandman."

Marinnis came to meet them. He was a smaller figure than the others, and in spite of the torrid sun, had a sallow complexion suggesting a bad liver. Innumerable wrinkles guarded the outer corners of his eyes. He patted Cliff's shoulder.

"Messenger—Messenger—" he frowned, as if drumming at the door of his memory. "Well, and what can I do for you, Mr. Messenger?"

McMory intoned:

"Mr. Messenger is considering residing in Nahi. He would take under advice the matter of occupation. I reprehend that you have need——"

"Apprehend, McMory! Apprehend, —— it all!"

"My dear sir, I—I—well, possibly under *that* construction."

Cliff interposed that he wanted to put up Peter, anyway, and that if Marinnis had nothing to offer, he was just as glad; whereupon Marinnis was interested.

"Um—I need an overseer. Let's see. Any experience, Messenger?"

Peter had been gazing at him narrowly, and replied with a start:

"Mate in these heathen seas for seventeen months. Kanaka crews. That's experience."

"So it is. You might come with me and discuss it. Stop awhile, Rudd?"

Cliff caught the signs Peter made to him and declined. He wouldn't intrude, he said, if Peter could get back alone. Marinnis proposed to lend his horse.

"Thanks awfully," Cliff acknowledged. "One more debt I owe you."

Presently Peter was looking over the plantation and the natives' quarters—little impressed by either, for they were plainly in a bad state of upkeep. He said nothing until they returned to the house and sat down to talk.

"What do you think of it?" Marinnis wanted to know suddenly.

"No use beating about the bush," Peter told him bluntly. "You're not developing it. Sort of don't care, is it? Other irons in the fire?"

He could see now a nervous haggardness in the man. Marinnis' hand went to the back of his head. He complained that he was not well.

"I've let it run down. Haven't got the constitution. The climate poisons me. I ought to be getting back to the States. You know Rudd well?"

"About as I know you—by hearsay. I found out on the quiet that you always have something on the go. I'm not greedy, but I'm tired of piker's games. That deal of yours in Ohio, selling cancelled city bonds and getting away slick and clean—when a fellow's down to his scuppers, I guess he could do worse than hook up with you."

Marinnis gaped and lost color.

"You—who said that? Who told you?"

"I heard it in the Hebrides. There was a fellow there trying to get wind of you. He drank and talked. Seems he was on your trail—clean mad—name of Frane——"

"Frane? What're you getting at? Frane's in prison—Peter Frane——"

"Had been, that's right. He broke jail, though. What's the matter?"

"Nothing. I don't know. What makes your neck burn like fire, Messenger? But you wouldn't know. If there was some snow to put on it—real snow!"

"Maybe you've got cancer," Peter suggested. "The crunch of snow under your feet, though, and sleigh bells in the air at Christmas—that's living, I agree. Nobody ought to throw away his life out here. You should hear this Peter Frane go it! Funny thing, too; he says he never really saw you. Can you account for that?"

"Just that one night—" Marinnis stopped short. His jaws clicked.

"Left him holding the empty sack, eh? To hear Frane tell it, he was standing on a corner one night, and you slipped him the stuff you hadn't disposed of and asked him to hold it a minute. Trail was getting warm, I suppose. Anyway, when the bulls romped up, they grabbed him with the goods red-handed." Peter flung back his head and laughed on a high key. "Served the kid right to be out after dark."

Marinnis' mouth opened and closed. "You don't believe that, Messenger? A fanatic; that's all. The —— take him! Where was he— How did you find me?"

"You aren't losing your nerve, are you? Even in a place like this a lot of opportunities offer. I've heard of men cleaning up. What's in the wind?"

"Not so fast, my friend! You've got a mate's papers, you say? Hm! Rudd seems unusually interested in you. Well—I think I can use you."

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"I should say yes—if you can use an ass like McMory. He'd spill any beans you put in his mouth. He let something trickle on the way out."

"What was that? What have I got to do with McMory?"

"I'm not talking; not till I'm let in on the ground floor."

"No four-flushing, Messenger! I've lived long enough to——"

"That's what Frane said. Quite long enough. He had a gun." Peter leaned forward. "I'm not trying to scare you. I want action. Overseer—pish!"

"You might get a good deal of action as overseer," was the dry comment. "We've got a man-size job on this rocky soil. Better go out and have another look."

"Rocky—exactly," but Peter took the hint and went out for another inspection. It was in this way that he came upon Mhouda, a keen-eyed, well-formed native girl, daughter of Uni-Uni, who called himself king among the blacks.

She was something of a coquette, and from the first she took to him. He greeted her civilly, although his thoughts were on the number of huts and the teeming dusky figures coming and going. He was wondering what Marinnis did with so many.

Uni-Uni, pot-bellied with banana eating, received him with a grunt.

"Go catchee. Make um work. Aw righ'. Much work; much rum."

Mhouda smiled at Peter childishly. "You no pick um stone. You king."

"I didn't say pick stones; I said work—work. You're not convicts."

Their expressions seemed to indicate, however, that picking stones was all they knew. And after a little further questioning Peter began to comprehend; they had on two or three previous occasions gathered stones and sacked them. Ballast, or a fake cargo, that would be. It fell in line with Marinnis' reported willingness to wreck one of the Rudd vessels. An act of friendship with profit attached!

After all there might be something in this overseeing.

Early in the evening Currie and Briscoe appeared, having ridden out on horseback. Peter, who had met both men before, felt from his observation of them that they had come for a purpose. Currie had the countenance of a hawk and the body of an Elizabethan courtier; he handled marine insurance when there was any to handle, and playing cards at all times.

Briscoe, unmannerly and with a quarter-deck air and a bawling voice, was a sailing captain down on his luck. He had lost two schooners on inhospitable rocks—insured, both of them, although he mourned their foundering and lamented eating into his capital. They wanted a game of poker, and Peter was invited to join. Marinnis staked him to an advance of wages, and they sat down.

Currie was in a funk and played loosely. Briscoe proved slow-witted. Marinnis took no chances. Peter won forty dollars and pushed the cards away.

"Is there anything you fellows are good at?" he asked. "I know about Marinnis. You're the man who laid the *Hattie Fay* on Chapham Rocks, aren't you, Briscoe? What's Currie got to his credit? Let's open the meeting, gentlemen."

"A sailin' man," mumbled Briscoe. "Sail like you play?"

"Oh, I can miss my reckoning if I have to. Question is what did the doctor send you all here for? Marinnis wants to go back home, I know. He's sick of the climate. Got a place in Ohio, I believe, that he's hungry to see. Pretty country in Ohio; orchard land that *is* orchard land. Same with the rest of us. Well?"

"*You* don't look unhealthy, Messenger," Currie said. "What's *your* record?"

"Increasing cloudiness with variable winds. I smoke, chew and swear. What man can do more? I've even been in politics. But I never committed murder."

"Maybe you never had the chance."

"Yes," replied Peter slowly, "I've had the chance." His features hardened; his hands opened and closed and opened again spasmodically. "And nothing to lose by doing it, either. I was telling Marinnis I met a man in the Hebrides that wouldn't count three—at least, he said he wouldn't. He was headed this way. If it's murder you want, you might get him. Any odd jobs, I might accommodate you."

They looked at one another. Currie stated cautiously:

"You're a friend of Rudd's. He'd like to go home, too. But he can't afford to. And he's stubborn."

"How do you know?" Peter whipped out. "Ever offer him his passage?"

Briscoe ventured with sudden bluntness:

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"Room on the Rocks for one more vessel. Some here would like to serve him. My sailing knowledge is——"

"—is a little rocky," Peter grinned. "Plenty good enough."

Marinnis banged the table.

"Rudd has a ship calling here soon. Make him see the wisdom of piling her up, and there's five thousand in it for you."

"Fine of you, Marinnis. Greater love hath no man—and you'll fill her full of petrified copra, eh? I didn't intend to go in for wrecking. I thought——"

"Get an agreement to cover expenses," hastened Briscoe. "Ten thousand will do the business. Currie's the agent here. I'm navigator. We like Rudd."

"You ought to," Peter said ironically. "I had an idea, though, there was another project on foot with a little less risk attached to it. What about——"

"I thought you asked me if I'd lost my nerve," Marinnis growled.

"*My* nerve's all right," Peter reassured him. "But I haven't got a man after me with a gun. Frane could kick up some dust —and lay it down to rest."

"Shut up about him, will you?" Marinnis' teeth gritted together. "Will you get behind this, or won't you? You said you wanted action."

In the dim glare from the smoky lamp three hard, unlovely faces thrust desperate looks at him. Outside in the deepening night he heard savage voices lifted in wild, uncouth song. Briscoe's muscular right hand gripped his arm.

"You don't want to make no mistake, Messenger. This here is a game we play tight to our vests. You wanted to come in. You're in. No tricks!"

Currie, dragging down his lips, drawled: "We needn't worry about Messenger. He's got more health to take care of than the rest of us."

"So I figure," was the retort. "I'll buy a ketch and tramp these seas for pearls before I hit back to America. Sorry I can't sell you a good neck, Marinnis, but a good rope'll break any neck, so what's the difference? Thing I want to know is what you're going to do with the ship of Rudd's when you get it."

"What's that to—" Briscoe began in a thunderous voice.

"Take it easy, Briscoe," Currie intervened. "We said we'll wreck it, Messenger. We'll wreck it, understand? We'll wreck it. I move we adjourn."

PETER was tempted to call the lie. He suspected a use for the vessel that they were not telling. But he held his tongue. No use making enemies. He rode back with Briscoe and Currie through the moonlight, humming to himself, breaking at last into song—a passionate love-song. The others jogged along silently.

"I could woo a lascar lady tonight," he ejaculated, "a brown squaw."

"Amen, brother," said Currie. "They're not so bad."

"Almost," Briscoe amended. "Don't forget to add *almost*, Messenger."

"That's understood," and Peter's gaze melted in the soft moon-rays.

He left the horse with Currie and ascended the drowsy, breezeless path to Rudd's house. The sound of a music-box playing "Maryland, my Maryland," reached him. He stopped where he was and leaned against a tree. His features contracted as in pain. He traveled the last few steps to the porch slowly.

A chair grated. A voice hailed:

"Is that you, Peter? Thank the Lord, you've come home! I knew you would."

"Eh?"

A foolishly startled face Peter lifted to the moonlight, a face transfigured, incredulous. For some seconds he did not move. Then he groped forward and sank down on the lowest step.

"What did you say? Will you repeat it?"

Cliff repeated it. He sat down beside Peter and put an arm about his shoulder.

"Now you're here, I've sort of given in to the loneliness. Well, comrade!"

"I guess you rocked me, Cliff," Peter confessed huskily. "Fact is, I was considering killing a man, but after that— Here, take the gun." He pressed the revolver into Cliff's hands. "It might not be fair to you." He wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. "'Peter,' you said. They call me Messenger, but Peter's my name. From Boston to Galapagos that's the first time. Bless your heart, boy, what are you sitting up for? All decent men are in bed, or calling on their girls."

"I don't sleep well. I hope it's all right for you to stay here."

"Quite. I'm warden of the pen, keeper of

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the kennels; but I'm not required to nest in with the menagerie. Still worrying, eh? Expecting a ship soon?"

"The *Sea Horse*, in seven or eight weeks. I didn't mean to squeal."

"When a vessel can't produce," said Peter, "it's got to be turned out to pasture. Rocks and coral reefs make good pasture for vessels to lie down and die. A hundred thousand would set you up in your bank. Why not take Marinnis seriously? He'd do it for you. Is it better for a man to go down or a ship, Cliff?"

"By ——, no man would do that!" Cliff burst out. "It would be man and ship both going down! Don't ever mention that again, Peter! I detest murder!"

"I won't." Peter seemed immensely relieved. "I didn't expect you to agree. Neither do I. We're not destroying; we're fulfilling. On the way back I got an idea, something for the partnership to get to work at. It's valuable. Listen."

He proceeded to outline a plan which he said would meet this poor period in shipping. His plan was for setting up wireless stations here and elsewhere by which the Rudd ships could get in touch with remote islands and find out where the markets lay. No need of big stations, he emphasized; seven or eight hundred miles' sending would do. Too much time was lost, calling at places that had nothing to ship. He knew wireless and could teach Cliff. The cost might be shared with planters and governments and others who were too utterly cut off from the world as it was.

"It's not just commercial; they must be made to see that," he urged. "We sit here on a sleeping volcano. Have you ever thought of that? Take Nahi. There must be two thousand blacks here to maybe thirty white men—and women, Cliff, women."

Cliff laughed at that. "They're peaceable. No fear of a revolt. These natives are civilized. They haven't warred since—since Abe Lincoln was a kid."

"Weak evidence," returned Peter. "Tomorrow I'm putting to work six hundred of 'em that haven't labored since Noah's great-uncle was a scarab. Suppose they object. Against that horde there's just thirty of us, 'omnivorous majesty of England' included. I don't want to be the road yet. I'm not ready. We've got to live first."

Cliff shook his head. But it was a grand scheme commercially, anyway. He would talk it over with McMory and write for prices to Sydney. He wanted to do everything he could. The ships were equipped to start with. They'd make history.

When he discussed it with McMory the next day, McMory was enthusiastic.

"A development of tantamount importance," he enunciated. "Let Nahi lead. Ah, my friend, the discoveries of science are wondrous and insolvent to lay minds. By all means, *mon cherry*. You have my official support. *In hock signal vincus*."

So Cliff wrote out to the atolls and archipelagoes and in to Sydney. He found a new interest in life; he was almost happy. He got the island buzzing with it.

A certain part of it buzzed like angry bees around Peter for suggesting it. Marinnis, suspicious at once, demanded to know what it meant.

"Marinnis," and Peter cocked his head humorously, "I don't fast and I don't give alms, but I'm —— sure somebody's got to be decent. Suppose you try. He thinks you're his friend, too. You ought to be very glad he's that foolish. It adds years to your life. And he's going to start a bank, Marinnis, a bank, and give credit. Besides, he calls me—never mind what he calls me. How's your neck?"

"Leave my neck alone! How does this affect our—intentions?"

"Well, for a man of vision your brains are poor, Marinnis. That wireless station will cost money. He's throwing good money after bad. Don't get jumpy. If you played the game as thoroughly as I do you—well, you wouldn't be here today drumming your heels and moping and afraid every minute Frane will show up."

Marinnis' eyes glittered. "One word more, and I'll fire you!"

"Fire *me?*" Peter stood off and contemplated him. "What a joke! By the way, you might raise my salary fifty a month. I'm not just satisfied."

"Careful, Messenger! Remember, it takes witnesses to prove anything."

It was a good shot, and, although Peter went out whistling, he went with a sinking heart. Marinnis was right; he had all the witnesses as well as the magistrate himself in his employ. What good was one man's word in the face of this?

He had another problem. More than

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six hundred natives lived on the plantation —many more than the work necessitated; many more than could be watched. And to this number drifters from the other plantations were being constantly added. He had complained, but Marinnis told him sharply to mind his own bu-iness. Enke and Torvedt, neighboring owners, came over in a rage to protest against the migration, and got as little satisfaction as had Peter, for Marinnis merely shrugged.

"Pick 'em out and drive 'em back if you like," he told these men.

There the matter rested, inasmuch as neither man cared for the job.

Peter had discovered that forcing blacks to work was like leading a horse to water. At every turn they demanded suitable recompense, usually in the form of rum which Marinnis had been in the habit of giving them even while they lay idle; now they shrilled for double portions, and became ugly when he refused them. And they set up all sorts of imaginary ailments against the slightest service. Besides, they kept up an incessant jabber, calling one to another in a language he did not half understand, so that most of his orders were lost on heedless ears, and they were able to formulate pranks among themselves to thwart him at every step.

The result was that in this immense hive of drones very little was accomplished, so little in fact that the drifters could not be discouraged from coming. Yet the peace and order of the island depended on separating the black population. Peter thought often of their breaking over and roaming wild; when a black showed his teeth and squealed, he seemed to see Mildred McMory pursued by such a face. He found himself thinking of Mildred McMory at other times, too. She had been sweet and gracious from the first meeting. And he was starved.

In the third week a bad temper developed. More than once he had observed Uni-Uni in ardent discussion with Marinnis, and Uni-Uni was counting on his fingers and waving his arms and thumping his chest. Marinnis barked:

"I said a quart if they stayed. Where are they? Show 'em to me!"

Uni-Uni pointed to new recruits.

"Me get 'em! Me get 'em!"

Peter reached the conclusion then that Marinnis had contracted to pay a bounty for deserters. It was a scheme. Where it would lead was the grim question.

It led in a direction Marinnis had not foreseen. Whatever he expected from it, it was going too far or too fast, for the rum ran out; he turned Uni-Uni away at last empty-handed, and the first thing Peter knew, a crowd was making toward the house, angry with incomprehension, jabbering and determined.

He ran after them and caught them just as they caught Marinnis. Cheated, they pawed the air and howled and danced on their toes and made horrible faces. One thrust his head close to Marinnis', whereat those in back pushed in, and Marinnis was the center of a storm. From behind a hand reached for Marinnis's hair and seized it. Other hands began to claw. The assault came suddenly. Marinnis was borne down.

Peter flung at the mob and fought his way in. He stood over Marinnis and began to battle with his two fists. These fellows were terribly aroused. He marked the gleam of a knife darting down upon the sprawled Marinnis, and laid the miscreant cold. He could be as terrible as they.

"You don't get 'im, if I can help it!" he bawled. "He's mine! Clear out, you fools! He's mine, I say! You've got no right. What's rum? Back up!"

His danger seemed of secondary consideration. But only to himself. To another it was otherwise. Mhouda, who had formed a peculiar attachment for him, had no mind to see him injured, perhaps killed. Fleet as a deer she rushed from nowhere and attacked the mob with hands and head and teeth. Her own tribe! What difference?

She was superb; she was a wild-cat. She bit and snatched and tore. Her supple body twisted and strained. The light of desperation flamed in her eyes. She was down—but in her falling others went with her. She grasped feet and ankles and tripped half a dozen. As on a ladder of these she regained her place, swarmed over them, beat and dismayed a huge fellow who was making it hot for Peter, and won to his side.

The struggle ended abruptly; the natives had anticipated no great opposition and had no stomach for real fighting. They drew off and melted away. The fallen crawled to a distance to nurse their bruises. Peter wiped the sweat out of his eyes and, panting hard, grinned down at Mhouda. With a swollen hand he patted her back.

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"GOOD girl!" he applauded. "Shake!"

He tried to find her hand, but swiftly, eagerly she pounced upon his, stared at it, petted it and pressed it to her bosom. He frowned, then laughed, and withdrew it.

Marinnis got up, pale as death, jaundiced about the eyes, unnerved.

"Where—where are they? Gone—thank God! You saved me, Messenger! You saved me!" He was shivering. He clung to Peter. "How can I thank you?"

Peter's laugh stopped abruptly. "Take your fingers off me! Saved you! Oh, yes, I saved you! Do you think when I came fifteen thousand—Mhouda saved you. Put your arms around *her* neck. You're going to be sorry you came through this."

But he could not so easily dismiss his part in the occurrence. The news of the affair reached all over Nahi and set the tongues of the white colony wagging with excitement. Marinnis at Peter's suggestion effaced himself for two days and carried the tidings to the harbor settlement, while Peter kept watch over the men.

"It would be a shame," Peter argued, "to have scrapped it out for nothing. You're a red flag here for a while. If you see Cliff Rudd, tell him not to look for me."

After Marinnis was gone, Peter stalked into the natives' quarters as if nothing had happened, and talked it over with Uni-Uni. But Uni-Uni did not know what the men he fetched were for; all he knew was that the pint of rum he had promised each newcomer out of the quart promised him, was not his to deliver, and he was having his own difficulties on that account. Peter nodded and, seeing Mhouda close by, thanked her and gave her as a reward a gold-piece he kept as a lucky coin.

She grinned in delight and submitted: "Mhouda lak you. You one fellah Currie, Mhouda not care. Lak him die plenty. Him catchee Mhouda—ugh! Bime'by one fellah fadder by me go catchee one fellah Currie. One fellah Currie go stop. You catchee Mhouda, Mhouda no care," and she looked at him with a strange wistfulness.

Back at the house Peter made shift for supper. In solitude he thought over the situation. Without compunction he took the lamp and went through the house from end to end in search of something he sought. On a shelf in Marinnis' bedroom he discovered a box of what appeared to be salt. He fingered and smelled it. He knew it was not salt. He knew it was phosphate—guano. He knew also that it had come from Enke's plantation. Hence the attempt to discourage Enke by enticing away the workers, he reasoned. Hence the desire for Rudd's ship, presumably, to carry the precious cargo. Hence the five-thousand-dollar offer.

Marinnis had brought this sample to test it. Peter dumped it outdoors around the roots of a spindly bush and filled the box with coral sand and salt and bits of glass and odds and ends that he pulverized. He thought this a very just set-off for another matter, a matter of a similar kind concerned with cancelled city bonds that had brought an innocent man a year in State's prison—and exile from home and friends and white civilization. A man without a country!

Late in the night he started awake, chilled to the marrow by an eery sound—the beating of tom-toms. The silver-white night throbbed with it—a slow, measured pulsing, quickening, thickening with other sounds. He sat up. His head and spine prickled. Instinctively his muscles bunched. Once in the Gilberts he had heard it, and in the morning— The hollow rumble gradually slowed down. Presently it died out. Silence creeping in like a fog, a hurrying silence full of eyes!

On the second day Marinnis returned. An order of rum was coming out, he reported. His manner was confident, and yet he lost no time in telling Uni-Uni the same thing. He went about smug and easy the rest of the day.

Peter rode in to the white settlement that evening. As he proceeded, his heart grew lighter and lighter, and the truth dawned on him that solitary existence on the plantation was a more oppressive confinement than a man ought to have to bear. The mere leaving it and striking out on the road became a tremendous relief. What a deadly thing to be shackled there as Marinnis was, days without number! Almost admiration for Marinnis' endurance struck him then.

He got off the horse and, looping the bridle around his arm, walked a while, kicking at the dust pleasantly. A roadman he was who had stopped too long in one place. His feet itched. And he was on his way to visit his friend, the only friend he had in the world. It was a holiday!

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But first he stopped in at McMory's cottage and unburdened himself.

"I don't know what Marinnis has told you," he said, "but the lot of you have stirred up something. The glorious flag bids fair to witness its first sunset and spill some of its red dye. What are you going to do? You're the magistrate."

McMory got on his dignity. "The lot of us? Who, pray? Who, pray?"

"I don't care who'll pray. I want to know who'll fight. They're beating the tom-toms, McMory. They'll sweep down here like a prairie fire before any of your plans mature. Where's a vessel to take you off? How about the women? How about your daughter? That wireless station now—that would bring help, eh? Suppose you cash in to get it here. Rudd needn't do it alone. Future of Nahi, and all that."

"My dear Messenger, my present straitened financial aspect mitigates——"

"No go, McMory. Since when have you straightened it? Who certified to Briscoe's clearance that time he went on Chapham Rocks? And the phos—I mean the rock—or should we say, no rock at all? That little graft is ample. Do you get me? Don't interrupt! I rarely stay in one place long, McMory, and travelers carry news like fleas that shake off in a warm room. 'I would be true, for there are those who trust me.' Chiefly inspectors, of course. I tell you, Nahi has a wonderful future. She blooms like a prickly cactus. Celebrated upon her illustrious shores one McMory——"

"Ah, yes, I presume so," sighed McMory. "For such public service then."

"Possibly, under that construction," Peter grinned. "Don't count it. There's not more than two hundred pounds in that package. Want a receipt?"

McMory rose hastily. "We won't tell Marinnis, Messenger. Promise!"

"We'll surprize him," was the reply. "We'll be regular fellers and let him speak to Denham, Lane County, Ohio, on Christmas day." He stuffed the notes into his pocket. "Blood-money from the sweating behemoth!" he mumbled.

Outside, in the patch of garden that bravely defied the sun, he met Mildred. She emitted a little cry at sight of him and came with eyes dancing to lay a hand on his arm. She was flushed from stooping. Her hair blew over her cheeks.

"You were so brave! Mr. Marinnis told us. Oh, I'm so glad you weren't hurt! They—they might have killed you!" She shuddered. "But they didn't."

Peter's swagger of the moment before seemed to leak away drop by drop. He looked at her and at her hand. Mhouda had the way of it; she knew what to do with another's hand. But he could not do that. A rather hard moment.

"I guess not. I've been hurt worse by a dentist," he blurted. "Pretty garden you've got there. I hope it—well—blooms the way you want it to."

She withdrew her hand.

"It's a poor climate for hopes," she said, and he wondered what she meant. "You'll come to the party tonight, anyway, won't you?"

As he went on he met others—women who gushed over him and called him a hero; men who slapped him familiarly on the back in a sort of camaraderie.

But Cliff's hail was the finest:

"Bless you, old man; here you are! We knew the kind you were when you first stepped ashore, and you've proved it. I won't be a —— sentimentalist, Peter, but you've got us all on your apron-strings."

"I should have killed a dozen of 'em and run for governor," Peter laughed.

"You held them off Marinnis, Peter, and you can be governor for that if my vote will do it. He's all I've got when you go. But you're not going yet."

"I'm for seeing the wireless up before I light out. I've collected some spondoolix to help get it." He laid on the table McMory's reluctant offering and the sum of his wages thus far. "Name of donor withheld on request. Order right away, Cliff. Don't lose a day. Write now; I'll dictate the stuff. A boat might call today."

"Of course. I'd decided to. But where did you get this?" He surveyed the money dubiously. "I'm paying for it, not you. Did you—drum it up?"

"Look here, Cliff: I never stole a cent in my life."

"Stole it! Do you think I meant you stole it?"

"I mean," said Peter, "sometimes they don't all believe you didn't. Let's sit down and chat, partner. For ——'s sake, let's not talk about money! Write the order and then sit down and chat in good white man's English. I've been listening to

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hog-Latin till I'm beginning to grunt. If that keeps up I'll grab the next tramp and go crew-driving again. Better than that, let's take a walk. I want the dust in my nose, Cliff—sea-dust especially.

"We'll hike down the beach. I won't have a care in the world if you'll just spill some good long yarns about Main Street and mowing a clover lawn and Sunday morning with girls in starched white dresses going past to church and street cars in the dusk and a mother to set out cold sliced meat for lunch before bed. Make it Ohio if you can—Lane County. Lane County!"

Cliff pulled up a chair beside him.

"You're tired, Peter. You're done up. Wait till I fix you up something to drink. Be right back."

"No, no," Peter objected harshly, and heaved up to drag Cliff down again. "Forget it! Drink, nothing! 'Might I of Jove's nectar sip—' Pretty song! How does it go? 'The thirst that doth the soul assuage'— Why should I be tired? What are you talking about? I'm getting fat and lazy. We're all tired—the whole —— world." His head sank on to his chest. "Talk! Say something! Me king—no good *kai-kai*—go plenty stop— Read from the dictionary! Who won the National League pennant?"

A mist formed in Cliff's eyes. "Peter, some men get to love the South Seas so much they can't leave. They fall for it as you and I fall for—paved streets."

"—— help 'em!" came from Peter's throat.

"You ought to go back, Peter. You've been out long enough. Why not?"

"Huh? Maybe I will. It's all right in the Summer. We were building a road when I left. In the Winter, though, you're all herded together inside—and the smell of the hemp, and nobody allowed to talk, and the good folks coming out to sing, and somebody to preach and pray, and no kni— I didn't do it! I didn't!"

He jarred himself as it were out of a stupor and began to laugh.

Cliff stared and bit his lip and asked sympathetically—

"Orphan asylum, old man?"

"Orphan asylum—no. School. College of Engineering. Not much of a place. I couldn't afford any better." He spoke in a peculiar tone. "But I've had a good time out of life one way and another; I'd better not kick. Lot of fun when I was a kid. Even in there you could pep it up at times. Besides, I saw so many that were worse off than I was that I swore I'd never let it get my goat. Happiness is your own affair, as one old goof said—one of the lecturers. 'Go out and do something for somebody else,' he said, 'and shake the fungus out of your eyes. Don't mope.'"

"It sounds like an odd college," said Cliff. "I think you're making it up. Have you had dinner? You heard about the party tonight, didn't you?"

"That's right. I forgot. Yes, I've had dinner. Can't we get 'em to dance? Lordy, I'd love to dance! Loan me a necktie and a clean collar, Cliff."

Peter's spirit came back to him in a jump. They went down the path singing *Bullfrog and Nightingale* and took the party by storm. When the guests crowded about Peter to hear about the fight, he made a joke of it and described Marinnis flopping on his ear and the blacks turning somersaults over him while he, Peter, boxed their heads for not keeping in line. He wrung tears of laughter. And then he danced.

He danced with Mildred McMory and with the fat wife of Rawson who kept the store. The cover to a tin was pinned to his lapel; it was properly inscribed for a medal, and if that part of the ceremony was in jest, the cheer that was given for him was genuine enough. Only McMory forbore.

Altogether it was a most successful evening.

BUT rolling out the next morning was a different matter. He yawned and stretched and grumbled that he should have been born rich. When he left, still grumbling good-humoredly, he said he thought he'd give up the job of overseeing and come in for good—or until a likely vessel happened along. Upon Cliff's earnest agreement, he repeated seriously that he guessed he had "had plenty good go stop."

But he counted on no such fortune as the end of that day brought.

It was at the end of the day that Briscoe and Currie happened along for another round of poker—and an executive session to warn Peter that the time was growing short for him to earn the five thousand dollars. Peter answered carelessly to this and demanded an advance from Marinnis

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for a poker stake. That brought a suspicious query as to what he had done with his money. They sat down to play in an edgy mood, and Peter set himself to win, to suck them dry, all three.

A vain attempt; something had gone wrong. It had been easy enough before, but he could draw no cards tonight. By eleven o'clock he had lost twenty pounds and signed a promise to work a month longer, for value received.

Currie counted his chips and got up. "I'll let you children fight it out while I stroll around," he said. "My horse gets loose. I'll have a look."

He passed out. Peter was thankful for the riddance, inasmuch as Currie was the big winner; against the other two the luck might be better. He concentrated to recoup. The thought of continuing on the plantation any longer than his purpose in coming required, galled him; and the accomplishment of his purpose was becoming more and more difficult, more and more remote. He sweated over the cards. Tight-lipped, he went at the matter of redeeming his signed word.

While he still pursued this will-o'-the-wisp, a sound grew at some distance; a broken, sharp-toned sound like the baying of dogs. It seemed to come from the direction of the cane field. Marinnis attempted to silence it by annoyed shakings of his head. It persisted; it advanced and grew heavier in volume, deep with anger. The yelping of a pack, one might imagine it; then the full cry. From the quarters an echo came, distinct at first, but swiftly merging with the other and swelling it.

Marinnis's gaze at his cards lost focus, wavered, and rose, swimming. The cards fell face up—a straight heart flush. A pasty green discolored his skin.

"Bar the door!" he half whispered as if he himself could not move.

"Currie's out there," Peter reminded him. "They're good and mad about something. Sit quiet and put on a good face! You fool, do you want 'em to know how scared you are? Pick up that hand! Bet! Take a drink and bet, Briscoe!"

"What's up?" Briscoe demanded. "Mut'ny? The dirty swabs!" His jaw fell.

"Revolution more likely. There's a king among 'em. If you get a chance, drop Uni-Uni. But bluff it out as long as you can. Here they come! Heads up now, Marinnis! Swallow a drink! Get a hold on yourself—it may mean your life!"

The night leaped and surged with the crude animal noise—nearer—nearer—

Marinnis babbled, "I don't deserve it—all I've been through—good to 'em."

"Raise you ten," Peter said sternly. "Play the game; you've got the hand."

Pounding feet rushed up to the door. Currie stumbled in, limp, pale, wide-eyed. A wailing breath was close behind him. He leaned against the wall.

"Your niggers, —— 'em! They nearly got me! Rotten ——! If I had a gun—! Laying for me! See here; can't you hear 'em? They're *drunk!*"

"Shut up!" Peter commanded. A rush of bare feet like a soft fall of rain surrounded the house. "Watch your cards!" he cautioned. "Keep your heads down!"

A sickish sweet odor blew in, the body smell of many men. The din became a commotion. All three men looked up at once. In the open doorway a half-naked crowd wedged, pushed and overflowed into the room. In their center was Uni-Uni with flecks of foam about his mouth and madness in his shallow eyes. Behind him prevailed a ceaseless chant. Behind him flashed, too, the surfaces of polished steel; machetes and the heads of hoes broken off.

Peter got up slowly and went toward Uni-Uni, since Marinnis could not move. But Uni-Uni's eyes rolled at Currie. Currie alone interested him.

"Dat um—yas, yas! Dat um! Me know um!" He pointed and began a slow, slinking advance. By one hand he pulled Mhouda after him. Suddenly he thrust her out before him almost into Currie's arms. "How you say? How you say?" he squealed. "Mhouda she be one Mary by you, you take um! You no take um, I kill! I kill!"

"Out with you!" Marinnis shouted, half-rising feebly and falling back again. At this the wail commenced again, like the warning of a rattlesnake.

Peter turned. "Currie, there's the girl!" he flung out, scowling.

Mhouda darted to Peter and huddled down against his legs. Her disorder of black hair, her wild eyes uplifted, made her pathetic, appealing.

"Me no live by um! Me no live by um, Petra!" she cried, rocking gently in her

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distress. "Me no live by um! Me live by you, Petra—Petra!"

Thereupon Currie stood away from the wall with some new courage.

"This is nonsense! I'm a married man, Messenger. Tell 'em so!"

"A married man?" echoed Peter. "Is that so?" He turned to the others.

Marinnis looked at Currie, and slowly nodded. Briscoe managed a grunt.

"A married man, I tell you, of course. And I haven't touched the girl—not to hurt her. Get 'em moving! Good ——, it's hot in here! Give us air!"

Peter stared helplessly at the black horde spilling in. "What do you mean to do with those knives, Uni-Uni?" he asked.

The wailing rose at once.

Uni-Uni smote his chest. The yelling stirred him to a frenzy; inch by inch he was nearing Currie, and the rolling of his eyes was wicked with purpose.

"Black Mary good Mary," he muttered over and over. "Me kill—yas, yas! Me take w'ite Mary all same like so. Me take um! Me king! Yas—yas—yas!"

A chill coursed up Peter's spine. Uni-Uni meant Mildred McMory. It had come. The savage mind, strong to mimic, seized upon the opposite situation to this. Vengeance in kind it sought. A thought long-smoldering, perhaps; the cunning of a fiend who had forgotten the civilization that had first forgotten him!

Four unarmed men—and Marinnis useless! Where was there any help? Peter cast about without hope. He saw a clotted mass of dark bodies choking the door, the window; cutting off escape; waiting, waiting the word. Mhouda at his feet whimpered, "Petra! Petra!" The mob outside screeched impatiently.

"Petra!" The sound of his name reached deep and touched a chord. After all it offered a way. "Petra!" He could not hold them much longer; only habit of restraint held them now. Mildred in the hands of Uni-Uni!

He bent over and laid his hand on Mhouda's head. She trembled.

"If *I* take her, Uni-Uni, will you be content? If I take her for my Mary? That noise has got to stop out there! If you kill, the big guns will speak from the sea! But I take her—see?"

He lifted her to her feet and put an arm about her shoulder. She sighed and rested against him, her eyes worshiping him.

"That's what you wanted. It's done."

Uni-Uni looked like a man in a trap, beaten without knowing how. He was unable to figure it out. At last, forced to it, he nodded and blinked.

"Are you daft, Messenger?" Briscoe sang out. "What's eating you?"

"Keep quiet!" Currie retorted throatily. "He knows what he's doing."

Marinnis lost some of his tenseness and sagged back. But Uni-Uni with a bound confronted Peter. He was exultant as he howled that he could not be fooled.

"Get away!" said Peter.

He drew Mhouda with him toward the doorway. The blacks backed off and left a clear aisle straight through the door. There where the light from the lamp shone on them both for those outside to see, he halted, put his hands on her shoulders and repeated without any expression whatsoever—

"I take you, Mhouda, to be my wife, my Mary."

And he stood so until the stillness that had fallen when he appeared broke into humming. Then he swung on his heel.

"Is it good, Uni-Uni?" he asked point-blank. "I have spoken the truth."

Scorning answer, Uni-Uni stalked by him and out into the night. In his wake the rest followed like lambs that fear to go astray.

Mhouda grinned as she clutched Peter's hand.

"You come by me now?"

"I come—tomorrow," he said. "Tomorrow."

He regarded her strangely, frowned as if his head ached, patted her, and smiled. She giggled and was gone.

Currie had dropped into his chair. Peter stepped up and leaned over the table. Deliberately he measured each with a hard glance.

"Now you've just about got me where you want me, haven't you? It couldn't have worked out better, could it? Now, have a look, and if you believe in omens, chew on this."

He picked up the cards he had held and turned them over on the table. Of the five, four were aces.

He left them popping their eyes at the hand and, leaving his money on the table, leaving his hat and his coat on a chair,

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marched out of the house and down the road that led to the settlement and the sea. As he walked, a ridge grew at the back of his jaw, and once he stopped and whisked about, clenching his fists. But presently he was on his way again. When he came up the drowsing path he was whistling. He dropped into a chair on the porch. Cliff came out in his pajamas and seated himself sleepily. Peter vouchsafed:

"Congratulate me, Cliff. I'm married."

Cliff yawned. In the middle of the yawn he jerked violently, sat up and squinted at Peter. Still refusing to believe, he pinched his arm.

"I don't see— You'd think she'd tell me." He got himself in hand. "I wish you luck, Peter. Yes, I do. You're Peter. Here's my hand on it."

Peter laughed. "It's very romantic. I don't think you know the lady."

"It appears I didn't. I knew she thought a good deal of you, naturally. And you've got more gumption than I have. I'll be turning in if you don't mind."

The wind blew softly out to sea. The starlight was intensely brilliant.

"I married a nigger, Cliff; a flat-nosed princess with yellow finger-nails and leather feet. No fuss and feathers; she admitted her love. That's what I like about it down here—a man can pick out a wife as easily as a Thanksgiving turkey or drop another man into a ditch, or chop his own head off; and beyond a private powwow that's all there is to it. Pleasant climate. Everybody happy."

Cliff objected that it was a hot night to joke. He was a long time coming to it. Peter thought he would never convince him. And then he sulked in earnest and walked around like a captive panther, when he should have been cheering.

Peter explained:

"Marinnis will give me a place. I came back to get my stuff and to tell you I've enjoyed it first rate. I didn't put up a game on you; in fact, this thing happened rather suddenly. That's the way with the human heart."

Cliff rose. "You'll excuse me," he said. "Good night."

Twenty minutes later Peter went in and stood beside his bed.

"You can't be a —— prude all your life, Rudd." His tone was crisp. "A snob—that's what you are. Looks to me as if you're mighty insulting, just because she's a shade darker than you. Well, you can go to the ——. Mhouda's a bright kid. She'll learn quick. She calls me Petra. I trust I have not grossly inconvenienced you by my temporary stay here. If the bill is not fully paid, send me a statement."

Making as much noise as possible, he slammed into his own room, rolled up his few possessions that he had bought of Cliff, and struck down the path, whistling more loudly than on the way up. Before the houses of the white colony his whistling was particularly offensive. He walked all the way back to the plantation and without hesitating an instant, woke up Marinnis.

"During my residence on this island," he stated with the lurch of a bucko mate, "I'm *Mr.* Messenger, with a howdy-do wherever you meet me. I'll take the cockroach bungalow shed next the road and have my meals cooked by my wife. Allow me to assure you that my skin is white and my blood very pure and good; that is, reasonably pure and *very* good. Pass the word to Briscoe and Currie. If any one of you gives me the kibosh, I'll set my foot on his neck and twist his tongue out of his throat."

Then he made a descent upon Uni-Uni's hut to fetch away his bride. The first wan streak of day pointed her out, hunched at her father's doorway, heavy-eyed from her long vigil, a wistful mite. Thoughtfully and without bitterness he surveyed her.

"Petra!" she murmured sleepily.

He gathered her in his arms and carried her off.

THE white colony, chill with dismay at the stark shock to its decency, everywhere chewed on Peter's social defection disgustedly. Any lurking sympathy was automatically wiped out; plain horror replaced it. And the end had not come.

Peter seemed suddenly to change, to throw off the simple pleasantness that had won them and to become a bugbear, for instead of sealing himself up from the public gaze he paraded the settlement brashly, without apology or pride, and took uncouth means to attract attention. Wherever he went he bawled loud greetings.

"*Kaoha*, Poehler! A hot evening, eh? Don't bother to answer, Poehler; you'll have a stroke. Say, Stone, it's tough on pot-bellies, ain't it? Where you looking?

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I'm right behind you." This with a roar of laughter.

McMory got his back up. "A black woman, bah! Breaking all the moral statutes! Just when sixty per cent. of our evil-doers have decreased, this—this swine on whom we have ravished our praise, insults our reason. Mating with a dirty, illiteral savage! There is no longer any doubt of his degraded degeneracy. Squaw-man!"

The ferment grew, fanned by Peter's galling shamelessness. At the store, before the houses, at the landing he elbowed those who sought to shun him. He courted their dour repudiation, their scowling silence, reveled in the situation as if it was a matchless honor. He even appeared with Mhouda, his arm about her shoulders, his gait a swagger, his tone a challenge. He baited Briscoe unduly, until the man's huge face was pimpled with sweat. And Briscoe had to answer him, acknowledging the vague power Peter had over him. It was the same with Currie and Marinnis.

Only to Cliff did his rude manner lapse. In Cliff's presence his mouth remained shut while he moved off, shunning that encounter. Once they met face to face, and Cliff, looking squarely at him, said quietly—

"How are you, Peter?"

Peter mumbled something, grew very red—and hurried on. Cliff stared after him unhappily.

On the plantation Marinnis watched him malevolently. He took no notice, did his work, and sat before his hut in the evening and strummed a cheap banjo.

Here Cliff found him with Mhouda lying across his knee. He was picking out "Maryland, my Maryland" arduously. Mhouda sprang up, chattering, and, raising his absent eyes, he saw Cliff standing at the horse's head with his hat off. Cleverly Peter changed the tune to "Suwanee River" Cliff approached, holding a revolver.

"You left this, Peter. I had hoped you'd come for it." He bowed to Mhouda. "I beg your pardon for intruding. I'm an old friend of Peter's."

Peter took the revolver.

"My dear, this is Mr. Rudd—Mrs. Messenger"

Cliff extended his hand quickly. "Mrs. Messenger, I'd like to leave you my good wishes—and a little token."

He returned to the horse and took from behind the saddle a roll six feet long and rather heavy, wrapped in paper. He put it down in front of her, bowed, and rode off without looking back.

Peter broke the paper and looked inside. "I thought so. A rug—the one rug he owned." Getting to his feet and watching the bobbing figure fade: "You had the stuff after all, Cliff Rudd. I salute you."

Smartly he flung up his hand. When he let it fall, he did not drop down again; rather, he stiffened. Mhouda squeezed herself under his arm and leaned her head on his chest. He tousled her hair.

"That settles it," he mused. "The boy's all wool and a yard wide. We'll get busy now. We've taken quite enough, considering the past and all. The dirt we sling we must eat. They think they've done for me; kicked me down the ladder. But you're a good girl, Mhouda. I'm not hollering; life's too short. If we can't get him one way, we can another. I'll be back. Taking a little walk by myself."

He left by the main road and took a fork over the ridge that brought him in time to a smaller plantation and a smaller house in the center of it. A short, stocky man with a worried face came out to shake hands with him.

"Enke," he said, "you're not doing well here. You're trying to grow coconuts, but that's bucking the trust, don't you know it? Coconuts aren't supposed to be grown on Nahi. The game is to skin somebody and sell the skin." He stopped. "What's that fellow running for? Appears to be going to a fire."

"One more for Marinnis, maybe." Enke swore in exasperation.

"Maybe. And he can't use the beggars. He's got too many now."

"It's just to force me out," said Enke. "Marinnis hates me. I had a run-in with him a year ago. I didn't like his business methods. He holds a grudge."

"He'd like to have you think so. But he doesn't, Enke. There's no money in a grudge. It's deeper than that, deep in the ground. You've got phosphate. I'm not holding back to get something out of you. You've got phosphate on the ridge."

Enke looked at him soberly. "I've thought so sometimes—but what of it? It takes machinery to get it out; it takes drills and—I'm a poor man, Messenger."

"So am I. But I'm in partnership with Cliff Rudd."

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"Rudd's got no money, either. And I won't be wrung dry in the market."

"He may get some," said Peter. "And he's square. I'm going to talk with him if you're willing. Of course, I don't know how the stuff tests out."

"I do," Enke replied. "I've tried it. I'm hanging on to it." Yet his eyes lighted. "I'd let Rudd in, though—and you, if you're with him."

"That's all I wanted to know." Peter turned about. "I'll see you again."

On his return he found Briscoe and Currie with Marinnis. The three suddenly went silent at his entrance and faced him darkly. Briscoe sauntered to the doorway and very plainly blocked it. Marinnis was worked up and walking back and forth. Currie spoke first and wanted to know what Peter was doing at Enke's.

"About as I please," Peter told him. "Oil your voice, Currie."

"You crook!" Marinnis spat venomously. "You fixed to trim us!"

"Watch out, Marinnis!" Peter retorted. "Peter Frane's behind you!" Whereat Marinnis jumped, started about with a low cry, and stared into the corner.

"—— you!" he panted. His face was wet. He sat down weakly.

Currie spread open a paper package on the table, the one that had been on the shelf in Marinnis' bedroom. He waved his hand.

"You put this stuff here. You were too late. We know what the real stuff's worth. You can go back to Enke and offer him ten thousand cash."

"Ten thousand? The deposit's worth a million, Currie. I'm in on it."

"Hardly," Currie returned smugly. "You're dickering with Enke; whereas it's the magistrate who passes on titles here. You're out of it. Teach you a lesson."

"Don't you think it," Peter disagreed. "Enke was deeded the land. All he's got to do is to show the deed in any court. You can't touch him, old skinflint."

"Hold your temper," Currie advised. "You're right—if he could show the deed. We're of the opinion he lost it. Careless of him—very. But it's true."

"Lost it? Well, the man that sold it to him—" Peter scrutinized the three faces. The blood rushed into his head. Beaten again! Done in!

Briscoe was coolly unfolding a newspaper. Still covering the doorway, he tossed it on to the table. He laughed way down in his chest.

"We might have saved you a scare, Marinnis," he said. "Just got this. Gather around, boys. Have a look. 'Tain't so bad a likeness. Paper came from Sydney. Everybody down below's had a squint at it. You, too—er—Messenger."

Peter winced. He knew what he would see. He had been apprehensive of this. One glance was enough. It was a poor but recognizable cut of Peter's face. The appended legend stated that Peter Frane had been traced to Auckland and still later heard of in the Hebrides; that there was a reward of eight thousand dollars on his head, and that he was wanted in Ohio, U. S. A., for an unfilled sentence.

PETER'S brain grew hot. He saw Marinnis cower down and shake as with fever. The man was beside himself with fear. Briscoe only guffawed.

"You haven't got Rudd's signature, Frane," he said at length. "Now we'll have that action you were talking about. He knows, of course. Go to him and pour out your pitiable story. Make him see this is your one chance of escape. It is, too. By ——, it is! And if he won't come through with a note to turn over fifteen thousand dollars as soon as the *Sea Horse* is lost, we'll steal the ship, and they'll search forever, and he'll never get a cent. Also, McMory will collect the reward for us. Mighty decent of us, *I* think, to give the opening. Fact that you've got a mate's papers helps you. As for Rudd, Marinnis is a bit soft on him."

Peter thought fast. "If that's the line-up—all right," he said and started for the door. Briscoe put out his huge hand.

"Sign up, Frane. Currie's got the paper. Feed it to him, Currie."

The paper was produced. It recited in substance that Peter Frane, alias Peter Messenger, contracted to wreck the full-rigged ship *Sea Horse* for a consideration (receipt of which was hereby acknowledged).

"It's a trick," he declared sullenly, "to put the responsibility on Rudd. If I sign this, you'll show he arranged to sink the ship."

"Only in case you don't come clean," Currie amended. "We take no risks. We've got nothing against Rudd, and as you're his friend, you'll protect him."

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Peter was as completely cut off as if he had been tied hand and foot. His hand reached toward his pocket where reposed his gun. But if he got free of these three, he was still imprisoned on the island. He signed.

Marinnis began to speak. He talked at a rapid, nervous rate. He said he was about to make it up to Peter for those months in prison. He was going to even it—aye, and a good deal more. Peter must not think that hadn't bothered him. He had acted only in self-defense, and he owed a debt of gratitude.

Peter waited until he stopped. "I can go now?" he asked.

Briscoe stood out of the way, and he went rather dizzily through the doorway. For hours he walked, aimlessly, leaving the road and trying to lose himself. He had to think—of himself first. If he should kill Marinnis as he had meant to do when he broke prison, his satisfaction would be short-lived. If he managed to force Cliff into the rotten bargain, they would probably bleed Cliff by blackmail later and get the entire amount of the insurance from him, besides murdering the boy's pride. And Enke—that opportunity was a sad-faced hope. They had stolen Enke's deed, or else corrupted the man who sold out to him—if Enke had really lost the deed.

He got nowhere in his thinking except to get angry, which was a good thing for it gave him back his fighting spirit. They hadn't got him yet. He was reminded of the Bible story of Samson he had had in an illustrated story book as a child. Samson, shorn of his hair, blinded and chained to the pillars, still had stomach. And if he had been able to dodge the falling roof when he pulled down the pillars, he would have won, even then.

At about this time he saw a light in front of him and investigated. It seemed he had come out on the promontory at Rudd's house. So he went in.

Cliff stood under the lamp. He read a newspaper, not the same one but with a significant cut in the middle of the page. And he jerked it away at once.

"Hello, Peter! The wireless outfit is on the way. Perhaps in a week it will be here. You'll come back now and help me? I never meant to be a snob, Peter. You've got your reasons. I don't know what they are. And I like Mrs. Messenger."

"Not a bad picture, eh, Cliff? I was wearing my hair short then."

The paper came up. "By gracious, it's a remarkable resemblance! Your double to a dot, Peter!" He tried in vain to hold his tones down.

"Taken at the College of Engineering I was telling you about."

"Almost think so," Cliff's voice fluttered. "It jolted me when I first saw it—for a fact. Quit joking, though. Mrs. Rawson was *sure* it was you, until I nearly had a fit. Laughed myself sick. And McMory swears it's you. I said to him when I got through laughing—he's awfully funny about it; awfully serious—I said, 'I'll bet he wishes he could qualify. He'd have the lot of you at his heels.' "

Cliff's eyes moved round to Peter's face, and Peter stared into them.

"You fool!" he burst out. "You half-grown kid! A play-actor!" He fairly snorted. "What's that for? You've still got Marinnis—if you won't marry the girl." He was for leaving the house. "That's a great choice, between those two."

Cliff caught him by the arm. He was tremendously bothered. "Look here! You won't quit! You're not the sort to quit! It was to the death, we said!"

Peter growled—

"Get right, boy, or the white folks will put you right."

"—— the white folks. ——them!" Cliff voiciferated. It was the only time Peter had heard him curse. "They can go to grass! They're nothing to me!"

"Anybody would think I was the last man in the world," Peter aired his utter astonishment. "I can't stand much more of this, Cliff. I'll be pulling some sob-stuff and tearing my hair. Leave go of me! You won't? Well then, sit down!"

"Same to you!" Cliff's determination could not be broken. "In a partnership each one stands half the grief. You sit down, too. We're going to talk."

"Exactly, we're going to talk." Peter sat down. "You won't have to stay on much longer, so the truth won't hurt so bad. Now, I'm Peter Frane all right."

"Go on," said Cliff, his lip quivering. "I'm listening."

"It's bad listening. I could get you out of the woods, and myself, too, if it wasn't for Marinnis. Enke's sitting on top of a fortune in phosphate that Marinnis and

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Briscoe and Currie are just about to steal. Sit down! I know he's your friend. He's been your friend too long. Enke will go shares if you supply the machinery to break out the phosphate. It's worth sixty dollars a ton. You've got the vessels to carry it. There ought to be from fifty to a hundred thousand tons.

"Also, Marinnis and Briscoe and Currie made me sign a statement just now to wreck the *Sea Horse* when I get a note from you promising to pay them fifteen thousand dollars of the insurance money. See the layout? There's your friend Marinnis, and here's a convicted criminal. You've trusted 'em both. Who do you trust now?"

Cliff pressed his hands to his head. "It never rains but it pours," he murmured. It sounded like a groan. "Marinnis did that? I'd as soon have thought my father— They threatened to arrest you? I'll sign, Peter. I'll promise the money. I'll write it this minute. Marinnis, you say? Marinnis do a thing like that?"

"You're believing a criminal," Peter laughed. "Steady there!"

"Oh, no. I remember you said the other day—it burst out somewhow, and I didn't understand what you meant. You said, 'I didn't do it! I didn't!'"

"Bah! You don't know me! What's the idea? Why take my word?"

"I don't know." He was on his knees in search of some paper in a low shelf. "You're my partner; that's why. And then, you're not explaining, Peter. It seems to me most people are always explaining. Here we are! I've found some." He got up. Tears were dropping off his nose. He mopped them off with his sleeve. "Excuse me!" he apologized. "That's a rotten habit. I'm in a hurry."

Peter was merely looking at him, looking and looking and looking.

"They can't get away with that, Peter, not a bit of it," Cliff rattled on. "They'd be Judas, would they? I can't think how Marinnis—Marinnis of all men! Fifteen thousand, was it? Will you come—on the payment of marine insurance on the *Sea Horse*—" He was mumbling as he wrote. "Will you come up here and—upon the loss of the same at sea. That's it—and bring your wife, Peter?"

"I may," replied Peter.

He accepted the note and read it. At least, he tried to read it, although the writing was difficult to see, and he coughed twice. In spite of his fine health, a certain weakness at last began to show.

He assumed to cover it by stating, "I had an uncle who was a play-actor. Very dramatic," and seized the paper by the edge, preparatory to tearing it up.

But he paused. "No, I'll use it first, then I'll return it to you. There was nothing in the articles of partnership about wrecking ships, Cliff. Our motto was: 'Don't give up the ship!'" He added: "We're not destroying; we're fulfilling. See Enke about the phosphate deal, Cliff."

"Deliver that note! Don't fool!" Cliff commanded fiercely. "If it's man or ship, Peter, I know a man that's worth more than the ship!"

"I recall," Peter answered triumphantly, "that no man would do that. It would be man and ship both going down. Your very words, partner. But you watch. I play a winning hand, always a winning hand in the end. See Enke, and get that wireless outfit here. An idea is rooting in my brain. I'm not shipping on the *Sea Horse* as I'll make out. When she sails from here I'll wake up the Pacific Ocean. Plenty of time to arrange details. It's late. Got to get back home to my hearth door."

THE short-cut he had happened on reduced his travel by a third, but it was almost four o'clock in the morning when he arrived at the plantation. Nevertheless, in the semi-circle before the natives' huts a wasted fire burned, and dark figures moved in its glow. Of Uni-Uni he asked the meaning.

The fire-light flickered on that impassive face as upon polished bronze. Uni-Uni pointed upward toward a waning moon, rolled his eyes and bowed in worship. Unsatisfied with the answer, Peter had to let it stand.

From his own hut Mhouda crept forth, whimpering, and threw her arms about his waist. He questioned her, wondering at her actions. She insisted—

"Me good Mary."

He had to do with that, for he was tired and he knew that the next day might bring him face to face with harrowing decisions. Fully dressed he flung himself down and scarcely closed his eyes. Mhouda nestled in the hollow of his arm and slept soundly.

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Poor girl, he thought; she was tired, too. It was rough on her.

Early in the afternoon, from the direction of Enke's plantation Briscoe and Currie trotted in and called him to come up to the house. There they demanded the note that Rudd had signed. A jovial warmth was Briscoe's.

"Enke's on the run. Should have seen him hunting for that deed. We ain't cutting anybody off entirely. You're lucky. You stand to buy your ketch. You're all right, if you *are* a bit independent. Let's have the say-paper, friend."

"I'm willing to talk business," Peter returned, "as soon as I see business. Marinnis, I once held an empty sack for you. They put me in state's prison, and my mother died of heart-failure. You say now you'll pay for that. In cash?"

Hurriedly Marinnis asserted:

"I haven't got it. Just as soon as this thing is put through, I'll turn over—um—ten thousand dollars to you. I swear it!"

"Will that make good all you took away from me, Marinnis? Think!"

"Fifteen thousand—yes, you're right. Fifteen thousand. I'll do it."

Peter nodded.

"Fifteen thousand you want out of Rudd. It seems to me, then, since you are friends and fellow conspirators, you, Marinnis, can pay Briscoe and Currie the fifteen thousand they ask of Rudd, and I'll take my chances on getting Rudd's fifteen thousand for myself. That is to say, your promise cancels Rudd's."

Briscoe appeared about to burst. Currie banged the table.

"I won't agree," he declared. "I get my money from Rudd."

"You see," said Peter, "they don't trust you to pay. Neither do I. Get a piece of paper and sign a statement to the effect that you'll pay me, and have Briscoe and Currie sign with you so that you can't shift the money about when I try to collect. I'm hard-boiled, Marinnis. I've held my last empty sack."

Marinnis gnawed the inside of his mouth, but he got the paper and wrote the promise. He signed and passed it to Briscoe with a jog of Briscoe's elbow that Peter disliked. Currie held it in his hand.

"Give us the other, and you can have this," he directed.

Peter produced Cliff's note and held it out. Currie clutched at it, jerking back the other paper at the same time. But Peter was quicker; when he sent Currie reeling from an open-hand thrust, he had the better part of both papers, and the signatures. Out came his revolver. A terrific scowl brooded above it.

"So I expected," he shot out between his teeth. "You dirty ——s! You sneaks! I'll shoot the first man that moves his hands!" He backed toward the door.

Briscoe roared:

"You can't get away from us, Frane! No boat can get you off, and if you try to hide, we'll hunt you down with natives! Throw us Rudd's note!"

Peter laughed. "Tell that to the captain of the *Sea Horse*."

"Cap'n Gill—eh? Cap'n Gill stood by while I did for the *Hattie Fay*."

"And his mates. There's a hole somewhere, Briscoe."

In a bound Peter was outside and running for the road. By a roundabout route he arrived at Enke's house, breathless but light of heart. On the other hand, Enke's depression was bitter.

"I've been robbed, Messenger!" he croaked a hoarse greeting.

"Enke, we've just begun to fight. Rudd will be out to see about that proposition. They're bluffing; they're bluffing all the way through. I want some bullets for this gun, Enke. I stood 'em off without any, but I may have to shoot. Lord, this is the life! Action at last, Enke! Listen fast now, while I tell you!"

He explained the wrecking scheme and what had occurred, even to Briscoe's intimation that he would hide—which he said he would not do.

"These bits of lead are all I want," he concluded. "I'm on my way back—when I've hidden the pages. I can handle that bunch with one hand—my shooting hand. Only thing is, I'd like to have you tell Rudd when he comes out. I want him to know that false note of his is safe. You see, there's always the possibility I'll get bumped off. That's what makes life worth the living; the gamble in it. Sit pretty, Enke!"

Again he made a wide detour, this time in order to secrete the two notes in among the roots of a tree he had marked. He had to admit that he was very nearly exhausted, but considerably at peace with himself. In good humor he trudged along, his feet

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now and then dragging, a smile of boyish pride on his face. From his high school days he called up the challenge of Spartacus to the Roman gladiators:

" 'If there be any three among you that dare face me on the bloody sands, let them stand forth!' " He flapped his arms. "Hot dog!"

Approaching the hut that he termed *home*, he went more quietly, especially as he recognized Currie's horse standing with drooping head outside the door. A slap across the flank sent the animal galloping down the road. He peeped in.

Sprawled on Rudd's rug Currie had Mhouda by the leg and was pulling her down to him. The girl hung to the rickety table and kicked at him. She was unmistakably worn out. One glad glance she gave Peter before she fell and Currie seized her.

"Me good Mary!" She pummeled Currie's in-thrust face. "Me go-od Mary!"

Peter ceased smiling; a livid lightning-pallor whitened his skin. His unrested nerves cried out. His hands rose. He charged forward.

What followed was almost inaudible: hate and soul-torment and death-fear are sometimes voiceless. Currie flopped out of Peter's hands like a rag half-wrung out; yet the life that had been in him was absolutely wrung out, and the clownish grin distorting his features he could in no wise change. Peter dropped, exhausted, and made to cover his face with his fingers, but quickly tossed them out to their extreme limit and pressed his face against the boards and shuddered. Mhouda sank beside him, made a pillow for his head, and crooned softly as she soothed his forehead.

"I killed him! I killed him!" he said again and again. "A murderer!"

A shadow paused in the doorway. Briscoe looked in. But Mhouda reached her hand to Peter's hip and drew the revolver. Her eyes looked past Briscoe into space, but the weapon rested on her knee, and Briscoe did not come in. Instead, he took horse and pounded down the road.

When Peter tossed no more, Mhouda lowered his head and slipped out of the hut. To Uni-Uni she went, unemotional. They talked. Others came to squat and listen, to add a word or two, to jabber, to grimace hideously. Wood was thrown upon the fire. By its blaze the gathering grew. In an hour the tom-toms began to beat.

Peter stirred and sat up. His head was ringing and hot. He thought the booming came from there. His eyes were unnaturally bright and seemed to have burned dark holes in his face. When he stood, he swayed. But the nausea passed, and he wanted to laugh, to laugh and dance. He knew then it was the fever.

At the door a black swarm of curious folk sat on their haunches. He passed through them like a drunken man on a vague errand to the house. Marinnis had gone, frightened away by the tom-toms, which only drugged Peter's senses. Lulled by the monotonous beating, he cast himself on to Marinnis's bed and fell asleep.

BROAD daylight woke him. Footsteps thudded through the house, scurrying like rats. Clinking glass—the natives had got the rum! They had sacked the place of everything of the slightest value. All sense of order was lost, all quiet blown to pieces in a tumult of voices. Only Mhouda remained oblivious to it, asleep against the lintel of his door. He lifted her and put her on the bed.

How his head thrummed! He must find Uni-Uni and stop this. But Uni-Uni was nowhere. Others of the more responsible had likewise disapperared. Figures danced in a circle. Women sat on their haunches and clapped their hands rhythmically. He saw hoes with broken hafts brandished in the air. He went among them, fearless in his feverish state, and ranted against the noise. Not the slightest attention did they pay, not even to make a demonstration against his interference. This was comprehensible; he had married into the tribe and was one of them. Let him rave. Squaw-man.

His lips were parched. Out of fumbling hands he tore a bottle and drank. The whiskey burned his throat but put strength into his body. Making sure his revolver was in his pocket, he started for the cut-off that led to Rudd's promontory. On the way he unearthed the two torn sheets of paper. Where was the *Sea Horse*? Suppose she arrived too late! Suppose no other vessel came! Hadn't warred since Lincoln was a kid? No, but they were ripe for it now! The wireless—ah, if they had that! Perhaps Uni-Uni and the headmen were sulking down there at this minute, making plans, marking where they would attack!

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On he lurched, singing, singing all out of kilter with his driven thoughts. He couldn't stop it. He had defied the law of the tropics, the law of Nahi, and it was laughing at him. When Briscoe said he couldn't escape, he had surely not considered this, but even this law was in league with the crooks.

Yet he had enough sense left to creep up cautiously to Rudd's house, to keep in the protection of the thicket. And on the porch he heard voices—Briscoe's.

"—what you might 've known. Why do you think he went an' married the black girl? Had to get 'em behind 'im, o' course. Saw 'is finish an' ain't partic'lar the means he uses. Been drummin' 'em up. They're started."

Others were there, too. Different voices chimed in, voices that had applauded his fight in defense of Marinnis, maligning him now, calling him traitor, renegade. To some incoherent question of Cliff's Marinnis declared:

"My boy, he used Currie as a bluff. A nasty time we're in for. He'll pen up the whites—let us starve to death, perhaps—and get away on your ship."

"He killed Currie? You know that?" came hollowly from Cliff. "I think you're lying, Marinnis. Sorry to say it; you don't know *how* sorry. I counted on you, Marinnis. I'll not tell these people why I can't count on you. But it hurts—bad. You're lying now, Marinnis. Peter wouldn't kill a flea."

Peter shivered.

"I'll speak to you alone," Marinnis clung to his dignity. "Of course, he's painted me up. An escaped criminal—why wouldn't he? You believe him."

"A convict but not a criminal," insisted Cliff. "Show me Currie dead." His voice rang out. "Organize a posse. I'll go. You're not afraid to prove it!"

"Come on," said Briscoe angrily. "Every white man. We may have to fight the black ——s. Trot out your guns and come on. We'll show you Currie dead."

Peter waited until they all scuffed down the path. Boxes on the porch raised his hope high. He knocked them in with the butt of his revolver; he pried at them with the leg of a chair; he tore them open. *The wireless!*

In the midst of his toil, surrounded by wires and coils and a cumbersome generator in utter confusion, he came to the end of his strength and slipped to his knees. But he must keep on! He remembered the Scotch and dragged it down. A gulp at a time, not too much! And yet in half an hour he was hopelessly drunk, for his stomach was empty. A maudlin thankfulness he muttered for the foresight that had sent him up two trees first of all to rig his aerial wires.

Reeling to the water-bucket, he doused his head into the cold well-water. So he had the clearness to fill the gasoline tank. But he got no further. He laughed as at a huge joke.

And on the echo of his mirth Mildred McMory stepped in at the door. He was peering through a cloud; she saw him very plainly, and put her hand to her bosom. What went on in her mind he would never know, but she did not retreat.

"Mr. Messenger, where is Cliff?"

"Gone—all gone. Jush me. Wan'na fiksh li'l wire. Won't fit."

"Mr. Messenger—" and he knew how repulsive he was to her, knew and laughed foolishly—"there are black men in the bushes. I saw them. What are they—"

"Won't fit," he repeated. "Gotta fit. Gotta call polisheman."

"The wireless!" she articulated. "Here, show me where it goes. Quick!"

He shook his head to get out the cobwebs. He told her. He continued to tell her, and she continued to make connections at his orders. At last the apparatus was hitched up. Then and not until then he fell back in complete relaxation. He craved sleep and closed his eyes without apology.

Mildred's shriek stung him awake. There was Uni-Uni and, behind him, half a dozen other natives. Uni-Uni was advancing on Mildred and grinning widely.

Peter waved his hand. "Go 'way, Uni-Uni. Go 'way."

Uni-Uni kept straight on. Mildred shrank into a corner, terrified.

"I said go 'way." Peter staggered up. He wrenched at his revolver. "Do' want any trouble. Trouble 'nough. Won't have 't, Uni-Uni. I'll shoot."

Uni-Uni gutteral something and quickened his stride. Followed a flash and a roar. Uni-Uni screamed and clasped his left arm. Peter swept the others.

"Go 'way!" His blood pounded better now. "Kill you all."

He waved the gun. They pressed backward. Uni-Uni's eyes rolled as he retired,

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hurling a mad jumble that Peter knew was a threat.

But Peter merely said, "First gun o' the war," and followed them out of the house. "Me, I'm a white man," he frowned.

With one eye on the doorway he dropped down in front of the generator to start it. After fifteen minutes of wrestling, he succeeded. By patient, drowsy adjustment he managed presently to get a spark. He gritted his teeth and tuned. He was ready to collapse. He called:

"S-e-a H-o-r-s-e. S-e-a H-o-r-s-e."

And into his stupor stabbed:

"N-a-h-i. N-a-h-i. A-r-r-i-v-e t-o-m-o-r-r-o-w. A-l-l w-e-l-l."

Peter grunted once. His hand slipped off the key. He was asleep.

It was said that the tom-toms that night could be heard far out at sea. Certainly the posse heard them every foot of the way back to the settlement. The island was in revolt, as they had seen in the swift visit they paid Marinnis' plantation. Indeed, only the noise and commotion saved them in their search for Currie.

Cliff of them all appeared not to care how near the dancing natives were, or whether he would be seen or not—that is, after he saw with his own eyes that Currie was dead. He came out as in a trance and had to be thrust into the saddle. As he rode, his mouth drew up in bitterness; his eyes grew morose. Briscoe and Marinnis, on either side of him, talked low into his ears, but he gave no sign that he had heard them.

In the settlement the attempts of the colony to devise means of defense found him equally wanting in interest. They looked for him later, but he had mounted the path to the promontory, preferring to be alone, attack or no attack.

Peter was asleep on the floor. Amazement struck Cliff, amazement at the insolence. For the wireless apparatus set up in place, he had but an indifferent glance. He sat down and stared and stared at Peter's drunken form, and after an hour of this, took the revolver out of Peter's pocket. The tom-toms beat all night but came no nearer. In the gray light Peter awoke.

"What are you doing here?" Cliff asked him evenly. "The partnership's ended. The drums are calling for you. Don't explain. Conditions do that."

Peter lay puzzling for a time.

"You seem to be converted and baptised."

"Naturally. You killed Currie, didn't you?"

"Yes, for attacking—my wife. Just as I would kill you."

"You probably would. I hoped you wouldn't say that. Currie's a white man." Peter just gazed at him. "Those natives are—or were—as gentle and peace-loving as kittens—or puppies. They're out after blood now. But you can walk in and out as you please without their lifting a hand to you. ——!"

"What are you doing with my gun?" Peter asked him.

Cliff dropped the weapon guiltily, then kicked it away.

"The partnership's not ended," said Peter. "We're not all quitters. About this thing friendship, I wouldn't expect you to know what it means. McMory's girl hasn't seen much of it, lonely as she is. She's got a better right to it than I have, so I'm not surprized you're grudging what you gave me." He scrambled up.

"Stuck on yourself—yes, I'll tell you now; there's nothing to stop me. You're so afraid of your pride that you'll leave her to dry up and blow away, just because you can't parade in front of her all your life; call it not giving her all she ought to have. That's love, is it? You don't love her; you don't know how. She's got blood in her, not a thin blue trickle. She was here helping me hitch up this outfit. If I had grabbed her and lit out, she'd have gone; she's that tired of moo-calfing.

"I ought to have said to her, 'Mildred, I haven't got a cent in the world, but I love you—I love you like ——' " Peter's voice became savage; the veins stood out on his forehead.

" 'I'm strong as a horse,' I ought to have told her, 'and there ain't a thing I can't do if you'll have me. I'll go straight as a string and burn up the planet, or I'll rob the gold out of people's teeth to buy you a silk dress!'. Bah! What does it matter how a fellow gets it, so long as he does *that* with it? Is a girl like her meant for a jellyfish? I'd get her—get her—get her!" He was shaking, and his eyes flamed with fever. "God help her for liking you!"

"You're insulting," Cliff rejoined. "What's any of this to you?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," was the sarcastic

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answer. "Only I can't see her stay here and rot. If you've got any guts, you might pick up that gun and put it to your head. Or is there somebody back home you can mince around with?"

Cliff was fighting for control. "Is this a part of your scheme?" He indicated the wireless. "I presume that is, too. And the note I gave you—Marinnis tells me you wormed one out of him. As for the phosphate, he showed me your sample; it was glass and sand. I wouldn't believe him; I told him he lied, until they showed me Currie *murdered!* Murder is horrible! The man who would murder——"

Peter frowned.

"Must hit the road, always the road. Home, sweet home!" He tossed a piece of paper into Cliff's lap. "Your note. Thanks for the use of it." He halted at the door. "Human nature's a queer animal. So long, Cliff!"

"Peter, they'll take you, or they'll shoot you! What will you do?"

"Is that any skin off your nose?" Peter retrieved his gun and stalked out nonchalantly. He did his best to walk straight, but his head banged so.

HE HAD no determined notion of what he would do; simply, the natives must be kept back, and he felt as big as an army, as carefree as the wind. That was the fever. He'd have no black scalawags rough it with him. Then he thought he would squeeze a decent stake out of Marinnis and bribe a tramp skipper to take him off.

He kicked at the dust—solid, substantial stuff one could depend on, the stuff of men when they were dead and had no further power to annoy others. If he couldn't go home, he could manage pretty well. A tight little ketch and headquarters at Tahiti where Mhouda could keep house if she liked. Then later on when——

A figure darted out of a bush and scampered off. He scowled as he continued on and came into the road. Something doing. The black idiots had their backs up, had they? Yes, for there rose another, making off like a rabbit. He laughed at the grotesque haste of those long legs. Outposts, of course.

Then as he came over the ridge, he saw them all, a spread fan of them like a herd of cattle, possibly five hundred male savages. He stood eying them, surveying their homely fighting equipment, blinking dully, waiting.

Suddenly out of the center a little figure detached itself and flew toward him. He smiled and held out his arms. Mhouda fell into them. Behind her the five hundred straggled up the rise with no semblance of order. Uni-Uni marched at their head with his left arm bandaged, a wrathful Uni-Uni.

At a hundred paces Peter sang out:

"You're on the wrong road, Uni-Uni. This one leads down to the ship with the big guns. Better turn around."

But the five hundred did not stop, and Uni-Uni glared open hatred at him. He prepared to act. His revolver menaced the battle-front.

"Like a fool, Uni-Uni. Because I shot you. What kind of king are you who make war on women? White men don't do that. Only one—and I killed him. I'll kill you, too, if you don't stop."

He took careful aim. Uni-Uni stopped. The five hundred stopped with him. A babel commenced, but Peter ignored it. He felt very big and powerful; his head seemed to swell. He was floating on air.

Deliberately he turned his back and calmly began to retrace his steps, his arm about Mhouda who looked up into his face wonderingly. He pinched her arm.

"How's the little lady?" he said.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw the force in motion, and flung about to threaten them again, declaiming of the ship with the big guns that lay in the harbor. They halted. He resumed his walking.

He was gaging the distance to the crest of the hill, approximately a mile and a quarter. At that point the white settlement was below about a quarter of a mile. He regarded it as his present duty to retard this evil swarm until the *Sea Horse* hove in sight. After that the fight would be even, considering the better weapons of the whites. He had enormous faith in himself as he swaggered down the road, a quite unreasonable faith based on the fever racing in his blood.

But he was sane, and he knew that if the *Sea Horse* failed him there was no help for it. His ears were attuned to a sound surging up from that long line, a sound sufficient to drown the interminable clangor in his brain. These savages had a certain temerity that he was playing upon; but

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behind it, in the dim past a wraith of virulence was rising. They had a grievance. —— Marinnis!

They were coming on again. He heard them. He felt them, felt their closeness like the breath of a slow-burning ring of fire. It occurred to him that if Mhouda were not there at his side, a missile must surely have been hurled by now, a machete thrown as these fellows knew how to throw them—straight for the center of the spine.

He looked at Mhouda: she grinned back. She knew—aye, Mhouda knew. The game little sport! When he swung around at intervals to flourish his gun and draw pictures of those other guns in the harbor that killed at ten miles, she swung around with him, even a step in advance. She knew, and she was not afraid.

But the last time the men did not stop. He had to walk backward as he lectured them, and he was beginning to sweat. They seemed on the point of charging him. That wouldn't do. He was close to the edge of the hill. Now, if they swarmed over him, there would be no warning to those below.

A swift glance over his shoulder at the broad sweep of sea revealed no vessel. Abruptly he stopped and shouted with all the force of his lungs:

"The first one that comes will get a bullet in his heart! Who wants to die?"

He pulled Mhouda back and, crouching on one knee, rested his left elbow on the other to steady his shooting. The revolver executed a wide arc. The natives in front halted, except at the extreme right wing where several, bent low, undertook to scurry ahead with the apparent intention of cutting him off. The revolver roared, and they crawled back.

In the center of the line a consultation was taking place. While this was in progress a hand rose in the rear rank and discharged something, whizzing. Peter fired at the hand, and it sank out of sight. A howl of pain went up.

"Three bullets left," Peter muttered. "Look for a boat, Mhouda."

It was bad strategy, for many eyes marked her looking and drew the right conclusion. Hands pointed. Heads craned to see over the bluff. A ripple of new meaning ran along the uneven line plainly crying that there was no ship, no big guns.

At that the discussion about Uni-Uni broke up, and an order seemed to pass. Then the whole line, a hundred feet long, swayed momentarily and pressed forward. With no individual to choose, Peter could do nothing. He wavered.

"Run, Mhouda! Run down the hill! I'll follow you!" When she tugged at him to make him come with her, he pushed her off. "Run! I'm coming! Run!"

He vowed he would kill her father if she didn't go. That alone started her.

Immediately he turned his attention to the oncoming force, haranguing them with vituperation, snarling, flinging all his impotent despair into his voice.

"You hear me?" He pointed at a place in the line. It pressed on, and he shot into the midst of it. "You there!"

He fired at the other side. In the confusion he bolted.

But with a yell they were after him. He had not dreamed how weak he was. No food—ah! He stumbled and went headlong. The surging mass charged.

CRACK—crack—crack!

It came from the thicket at his left hand—a carbine doing terrible mischief. Crack—crack! The bloody yell broke in surprize. Crack! Black forms fell. Warding arms flew up. Uninjured men dropped prone and let others trip over them in a tangle. Peter reeled up. The world was rushing around like a top. The face of Cliff Rudd grew out of the mist it made.

"Take my arm!" commanded Cliff. The gun that had stopped the charge was smoking in his hands. As he spoke, it went to his shoulder. Crack—crack—crack!

"Watch your step, Peter! I have to keep an eye on 'em! Didn't know I could stand off a regiment. Great lark when you once get into it. I watched you. You're a wonder. Gently, Peter! It's not far, and they have to defile into the road. Rather like to handle them alone. They're plagued poor warriors, aren't they?"

"It's murder to fight 'em," mumbled Peter. A shock ran through Cliff's frame. The carbine fell from position—was up again, spitting venom.

"It's their lives or ours!" the boy cried out defensively. "It's war!"

"Love and war," Peter laughed irresponsibly. "Love's as honorable as war. Dying's not hard. If you've got the drop,

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I'll shuffle around for myself. I can't go with you. There's eight thousand dollars on my head, and it's heavy, Cliff. I'll forage. I'll make out. Good boy!"

He patted Cliff's shoulder and reeled away along the lower ledge at right angles with the settlement.

He saw men running from the houses. Better than that, he saw the sun dancing on golden trucks of three masts rising far out at sea. The *Sea Horse!*

So he reentered Cliff's cottage and searched for food. Graham crackers—cheese—a crock of marmalade. He felt steadier, better able to fight the headache. All at once he reasoned that he must get aboard the *Sea Horse* and sail with her, if it could be managed. She would be at her anchor by dark. He knew odd places to stow away.

The problem was to reach her unseen. But it would be a problem easier to solve now than later, assuming that this fever gained on him. At present he had his head with him, at least. Should Briscoe and Marinnis still intend to scuttle her, he might thus be able to defeat them.

With this in mind, he sat down and wrote a letter to Cliff. The partnership, he wrote, as they had originated it, was not ended because it was a partnership to the death. He hoped that would be a long time yet because he had enjoyed it in spite of the difficulties. When he came back for Mhouda he expected to find Cliff digging out phosphate with Enkè, whom he had seen safe at the settlement.

He had not once lied; he wished that understood. As far as that went, Cliff no more believed he had than he thought Cliff was a jelly-fish. It took all kinds of weather to cement friendships. For his bloody hands he asked forgiveness. For Cliff's bloody carbine he gave it. He was sorry not to help with the wireless. He concluded:

"Look in on my wife once in a while. Luck to you and Mrs. Rudd." He signed, "Dust from the road," and folded the sheet before a thought came into his burdened head and caused him to smile; whereupon he added a postcript:

"Out looking for me, weren't you? Not just satisfied to leave me with my friends. Blood will tell, Cliff—red blood."

Hiding the letter in a clean shirt of Cliff's, he went outside.

The *Sea Horse* was tacking in—a beautiful sight. Under cover of high bushes he approached the edge of the hill and looked down. Natives were squatted on the ground in groups. Uni-Uni with some others stood out before a score of armed white men leaning negligently on rifles, forming a court of arbitration. Uni-Uni was airing his difficulties, pointing to his wounded arm, working up a strong case.

What a bubble! In the end an indemnity in rum would salve his feelings; and for those lost in action—if there were any such—the rum would go farther without them. Before the ship's canvas fluttered down, the five hundred began melting away.

A boat left the *Sea Horse's* side and was received with customary honors. There was McMory waving his hands. How shortly ago, mused Peter, it had been for him! And now, if they could lay hands on him— The dusk settled quickly. Those careful citizens under Nahi's tropical law went inside. Lights sprang up. Entertainment for the new arrivals! Darkness, silver-white, with that majestic vessel on guard!

It might have been ten o'clock when Peter wormed down the hill toward the water's edge. A light haze dimmed the stars as he circled McMory's house with its tinkle of music. He thought himself alone, but a figure rose from a fallen palm-tree.

"God speed you, Mr. Messenger!"

Mildred McMory! He paused, dumb. Some one was hurrying toward them. He remembered the note Marinnis and Briscoe had signed, and swiftly he put it into her hands before he made for the protection of the grove.

"What are you doing here? I've been looking for you?" a strained voice cried. It was Cliff's voice.

"Mildred, see here, I haven't got a cent in the world, but I love you—I love you like ——!"

Mildred gasped.

"I'm as strong as a horse, and there's not a thing I can't do if you'll have me. I'll——"

But Peter waited for no more.

When he had tied his shoes and the revolver around his head, he waded out and swam noiselessly for the ship. He had to trust to luck that none would be forward when he swarmed up the anchor-cable; but his luck was the solitary thing he had never

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doubted, and the adventure was accomplished with ease.

Immediately he hunted a place in which to secrete himself until the ship sailed. The revolver he unstrapped from the top of his head where he had kept it dry. That revolver must stand between him and Briscoe when Briscoe tried to scuttle the ship. But, although he fought off the longing to sleep and watched until sun-up, Briscoe did not come aboard.

IT SURPRIZED him that all that morning he saw no signs of the loading. Near noon the watch came back from shore-leave, and in another boat came Captain Gill and Briscoe and Marinnis and Cliff. He was more astonished when only Cliff rowed ashore, and the order was bawled for raising the anchor. Marinnis sailing!

The *Sea Horse* stood out to a sultry land breeze. The captain was in a bad frame; from the sail loft Peter heard him growling.

"The glass is down," he fumed. "How about *too much* weather?"

He and Briscoe and Marinnis were standing at the port rail when Nahi sank in purple mist and Peter stepped out to greet them.

"So that's where you were," said Gill. "Got passage money?"

Marinnis laughed. He seemed to expect Peter to wilt at that question in such a tone, but Peter laughed as heartily.

"What's the game?" he asked. "Let's have it all at the start. You can't shock me. Just enough for a hand at poker," he added.

"Well," and Gill stepped forward, "first I arrest you as master of this vessel for beating your passage. You'll market good in Sydney."

"Fine and neat," Peter replied unmoved. "Then what, Briscoe?"

"Then we get our money out of 'er, —— you!" mouthed Briscoe. "Rudd wouldn't see us. Did you think you could get by with that?"

"With my money?" put in Marinnis. "Sorry to disappoint you."

"All right," said Peter. "As I see it, you're sore, and you've fixed it with McMory to hold up Cliff Rudd when you've wrecked the ship. If he don't hand over about two thirds of the insurance, you'll frame on him that he hired you to do it."

"That's pretty good for you, my lad," Gill sang out.

"It's easy," said Peter. "Now get this: Rudd's taken the bit in his teeth and is marrying McMory's daughter. Not so good, eh? Also, I made a wedding present of the paper that you, Marinnis, and you, Briscoe, and Currie signed. It gives the facts, and as far as it draws me in I should worry. One more count can't hurt much."

"Um—quite a gambler, Messenger, yes, yes," came from Marinnis. "Fact is, I signed Briscoe's name to that, and—um—Briscoe signed Currie's, and the—um—late lamented signed mine. McMory can—um—do as he likes. There's others hereabouts."

Peter's poker experience kept him cool when he saw his plans topple.

"How about the mates? The wireless man?" he asked.

"The mates are men of intelligence," Gill guffawed. "The wireless operator is ashore on Nahi, ready to set up stations that are too late."

Gill's voice was careless, the sudden leap for Peter was unwarned. Yet Peter's knuckles flew for Gill's jaw before Gill could touch him.

It was a pretty fight, after Peter gave up hope of drawing the revolver. A big man fought a smaller, quicker man. The only advantage lay in having friends to give aid, and the advantage of this sort was Gill's. Briscoe tripped Peter.

Marinnis regarded the fallen man on whom Gill had snapped hand-cuffs.

"Well, it's not so bad," he chuckled; "you can still play poker."

Peter wiped his cut lip on his sleeve. "You think you can leave me to hold the sack again, Marinnis. What'll you bet?"

"I'd say it's your freedom against mine," Marinnis leered.

"Piker's odds." Peter spat out blood. "My life against yours, Marinnis. Play a man's stakes. My life against yours—that's poor enough."

He could not have counted then on the wind, which was hundreds of miles distant. But he had been a sailor, and the storm-signs were ominous. Gill noted them and stripped the masts, but before that he locked Peter below, whereas Peter had set up the wireless station on Nahi with the single purpose of communicating from the *Sea Horse* in case he could not handle Briscoe otherwise.

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The night shut down on him while he hummed under his breath and puzzled. Each step in the storm's growth he could judge by the roar and the crash of greater and greater tumult, by the groaning of the timbers at his head, by the shouting and tearing aloft. A wild night! Hate and cunning past that of mortals was rampant. A dolt, this Gill; a dupe! He wanted wrecking weather, did he? He put out to find it with the glass at twenty-nine. Well, he had it, more than he could stand of it!

And it was Gill, frightened, cursing, who burst into the cabin in the middle of the night with the strain of hours in his face. "They say you know how to send wireless! That so?" And he was off again with a string of blasphemy.

"That's so," said Peter. "But you'll take these off."

Fumblingly Gill unlocked the steel cuffs and led the way. Peter did not hurry. He rubbed his wrists and stopped at the head of the companionway where Marinnis crouched and, nearly out of his wits, watched the mountainous green seas loom up over the rail. He put his mouth close to Marinnis' ear.

"It's a good sack to hold, Marinnis. You're in it. I always win."

Marinnis did not hear him; was too overwhelmed to hear anything but the scream of agony the wind shot at his ear-drums. So Peter went on—to the sail loft amidships where he had been, and not known it as a place of power. He held his breath and wrapped his arms about the life-line, swinging out while two deluging seas swept four feet deep across the deck. Then he was in the deck-house.

"Hurry now!" Gill shouted. "Will it work? Look alive, I tell you! Take this message:

Sea Horse. Rudder snapped off. Sinking in latitude——"

"Sinking?" echoed Peter. "Sinking?" He frowned; but almost at once he was grinning. "Say, that's a joke on Marinnis. All right. Give me the position."

On the promontory on Nahi where the trade wind blew fresh but not with the freshness of this one-hundred-mile gale, word fell from a ship doomed at sea.

Sea Horse—latitude twelve, eighteen, twenty-nine; longitude changing every minute. Rudder snapped. Foretopmast gone. Appetite gone. God pity the poor sailors on a night like this. Captain says we are sinking. Anybody listening?

Somewhere on that troubled expanse another voice called:

Hold on. Hold on. What is your longitude?

And the answer was:

Ha Ha Ha.

Yet after a little the longitude was given, followed by:

The old man lost his hat. Marinnis—but why drag him in? Briscoe wishes to be remembered.

For twenty minutes nothing distinct battled through that elemental fury. Then life teetering on the edge of eternity called again:

The cook is making sandwiches for the boats. Going on a picnic. Sit under the trees. There goes the mast.

A man sat at the key in Cliff's house and listened agape. Behind him, striding up and down, up and down, the tears rolling off his chin, Cliff talked to himself, arguing, cursing, praying. The lightning flared, showing his face drawn and white and acrid.

"Can't you get him? Can't you get him? Tell him——"

The man at the key shut his lips down hard. The instrument once more leaped with animation. His mouth spelled the words wonderingly:

Here we go. Looks pretty wet. Where did I put my umbrella? Like to wait for you, but pressing business elsewhere.

A pause—endless! At last:

My mistake. The boats are smashed. We are sinking stern first. Thanks just the same. The dust is settled. That's a blessing. Give Mhouda——

The operator pounded and pounded. He was caught up in the spell of the thing. Away out there the end of all matters had come, and a man—a man who occupied his place—laughed over the great adventure. At the door of his marveling mind a bit of verse knocked for utterance, a tribute to bravery. Flinging back his shoulders, staring at the wall, he dispatched it:

What dam of lances brought thee forth
To jest at dawn with death.

There was no answer.

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Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

HEADSTALLS again. It's interesting to note the variety of opinion on an article of common use.

Cummings, California.

An old subscriber, I have noticed the correspondence concerning "headstalls." Any catalog of one of the firms making Mexican saddles will show what is a headstall. It is, in Irish, what is left of the bridle after bit and reins are removed and has nothing to do with halters, etc.—CHARLES G. HUSE.

A LAST October letter from our comrade Dr. W. C. Robertson. They've been having some revolutions down there. What's the Texan point of view on his cattle-land theory?

Galeras, Olancho, Honduras, C. A.

I must have missed the number in which the brigade was asked to say whether it wished criticisms or not. I do miss one from time to time. Especially do I when we have a revolution on hand as we have had for some time now. Perhaps that is too strong a mode of expression. Perhaps I ought to say revolutionary movement. We have had forty-two of them in the last forty-three months, which comes perilously near being constant.

THE last was the hottest yet, and is likely to be the last for some time, for the Government played hob with the *azules*, as all these revolutionaries are generically called. I really do not know why, unless it be in contradistinction to the *colorados*, the reds, as the Government troops are called. Reds and Blues, the blue being the chaps with the Irish temperament—"agin the Government."

The bunch that came in from Nicaragua this last time had a pretty good time for a while, running about and looting. They would have a scrap once in a while which amounted to nothing, indeed we all supposed that the Government troops were really anxious to be whipped so they could join the revolutionists. It surely looked that way when you consider this: There was a scrap in the Valley of Lepaguare, within earshot of us here, where the two parties lammed away for about two hours and a half, employing two machine-guns and a pom-pom, and the net result was three *muertos* and a few wounded. The Govt. troops were defeated and the *jefe político* of the Department was taken prisoner. They went on to Juticalpa, but another bunch of Govt. lads came along and ran them off, when they took the road for the coast, to be squeezed between two forces of Govt. *colorados*, who made a clean sweep of them. It was a complete butchery. No comic opera scrap was that, but the real MacKay. Shambles is the word. Blood flowing like water, etc. The man who says that the Honduran barefoot is a coward, lies in his teeth. Those poor fools stood to their colors till the last one was killed. No braver men, nor greater fools, can exist.

I'd have been at you long ago, but I have been busier than a rat under a hot pot, and have also been

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taking another look at the final excavation. During the late unpleasantness my house was full of native refugees, who brought a specially complicated mess of grippe with them. I got it, of course, and, as I was not quite convalescent from my other attack, had a relapse which all but took me West.

That is all over now, though, and the old man is as good as new once more.

I DON'T have any too much time really, as I am up to the eyes selling real estate—cattle lands on a big scale. There is quite a movement of the cattlemen this way. Conditions in the States seem to be bad for them, especially those on the West coast. Texas is now being given up to other industries to a large extent and the free range is a thing of the past there, so many of the leading Texans are feeling outward for some other land where the old conditions can be found again. This is the nearest spot and all the old conditions are duplicated here with the added advantage of cheap labor, so they are picking up the best of the lands. This plays into my hands to a large extent as I stand more than well with the natives and they wish me to handle their offerings. A fellow never knows where the lightning will hit, and I never would have imagined myself in the rôle of a real estate man, but it has been forced on me to a large extent.—Doc.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Will H. Grattan rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in the magazine.

To toss a brand upon the Camp-Fire at the invitation of the editor is, indeed, an occasion. Were I not already familiar with the aims of the friendly circle, the very name would lure me on. Camp-Fire. The word is a picture to every adventurer. He needs no lexicon to understand its call.

FELLOW adventurers, I wonder if you would care to confess just how much the sound of words, of names and places, has figured in your lives.

"Dad, guess I'll lay off a week and take a run up the Big Sandy," you say.

And the name, "Big Sandy," rolls off your tongue like music.

You talk of a trip into the "timber." Half the joy of it would be missing if you said, "woods." At least, it would be for me. And I don't imagine I am so greatly different from others who feel the call of the outdoors and love the freedom of hills that nudge the sky and plains that reach to sundown.

It almost spoils some beauty spot to find that it has a name as commonplace as bread pudding.

THE American West always has been my home. I have followed many an adventure trail up and down the Pacific coast and through the Rocky Mountain States. I cannot imagine what the west would be without a Rogue River, Little Big Horn, Golden Gate, Jackson's Hole, Old Cheyenne, Big Teton, Pend D'Oreille, Cripple Creek, Rawhide Butte, Powder River, Red Cloud, Tin Cup, Hell's Hip Pocket. They're clarion challenges to the romancer.

So that is a reason there's a Devil's Cliff in the story that has won me this invitation to Camp-Fire."

YOURS truly follows the newspaper game and has chased it madly through mountain passes, over sage-brush plains, along the San Francisco and Puget Sound water-fronts, among the golden vineyards of California, the red apple country of Wenatchee and the raspberry paradise where flows the Puyallup. It's a very elusive game. Just when I've thought I've caught it, lo and behold it's away off yonder.

But in my adventuring I must confess I never met a grizzly bear under the same conditions as did the old prospector in my story. And I'm blissfully hoping I never shall.—WILL H. GRATTAN.

DIDN'T we have a Camp-Fire argument on gold tarpon, or did I merely see some letters about it that have gone into our cache and not yet come to the surface for printing?

St. Petersburg, Florida.

Am sending you a little dope that may be of interest inasmuch as it was one of the "71" boys that "done it." We are having little adventures of our own that are not fiction. Some one at Camp-Fire might tell me. "Why is a gold tarpon?" I would like to hear what they think about this bird we caught. I do not know if you are familiar with tarpon fishing, but will tell you what we have done.

MR. HENDERSON and I never saw a tarpon before we pulled one out of the water during the full moon last month, May. We fish at night during the full moon; we have seven nights' fishing in each month. The tarpon "run" was during the months of May, June, July and August. We have fished twelve nights so far this season and have caught 14 fish, landing two fish on two of the twelve nights. Often we have played a big fellow for an hour or two and then had him get away. Our largest fish was six feet 11 inches long, weighed 152 lbs, the smallest weighed 58 lbs. We use a rod and reel (No. N. O. gaff hook), fishing from a 24-foot open boat in "Johns Pass," west coast of Florida opposite St. Petersburg.

Twice we have been pulled overboard trying to coax one into the boat when we thought we had him played out. The longest we have had to play a tarpon was 3 hours and 22 minutes, the shortest time 18 minutes.—LEE WHETSTONE.

And another letter bearing on the same subject, for it seems Captain Whetstone and Mr. Henderson caught one of these debatable fish.

Philadelphia.

I want to take up a few seconds of your time to let you know that I received a letter from a comrade, Capt. Lee Whetstone, who is on a fishing trip down in Florida waters. He states he would like to see an argument started in the columns of Camp-Fire. He asks "Why is a gold tarpon?" You see, there was at one time an old Indian legend about a gold fish, as you see in the clipping enclosed, and those old fishermen along the Florida Keys never believed it and to help prove it this one mentioned in the

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clipping has offered a prize to the first fisherman capturing a gold tarpon. So Capt. Whetstone, our buddy, goes out with this Mr. Albert Henderson, and gets one weighing 150 pounds. Capt. Lee Whetstone immediately thinks of Camp-Fire and wants all the fishermen in our circle to hear about it and he asks me to write you about it. The fish is actually a gold color, for to prove it Cap. sent me a scale off it which measures three and a quarter inches across and half of it has a shining gold color. So you see that no matter where our comrades be they always think of good old Camp-Fire. For the benefit of the anglers among us I'll quote Capt. Whetstone's letter.—ALFRED A. KROMBACH, Station No. 24.

SOMETHING about the Hole in the Wall from one of us who knows that vicinity:

St. Paul, Minnesota.

I noticed a request for information regarding the Hole in the Wall. It has been less than 30 days since I saw the place. It is located in Wyoming about 72 miles N.W. of Casper, county seat of Natrona Co. The Hole in the Wall is in Johnson Co. on a creek named Buffalo. I was there first in 1897 and know some of its history and some of the old gang. A few are still alive and living around there.

Most people would be disappointed in this place as it is nothing like the stories we have read concerning it. Still it was in the old days a safe retreat with the mountains on one side and the red wall on the other. Lookouts could see a posse hours before they reached them and make their getaway to the Big Horn mountains, where they had another place of concealment really better than the Hole.

Am well acquainted with all that country mentioned and will be glad to answer any questions. I spent years in that vicinity as a trapper and cowpuncher. Just left there about a month ago.—Z. Y. X.

ORIGINAL covers of *Adventure* are for sale to the highest bidders.

IN ACCORDANCE with our Camp-Fire custom Hervé Schwedersky arises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in the magazine.

I am here because I am here, as the old song goes, and mighty glad to be here; you know the thrill of having one's first story accepted. Well, as the rookie of the awkward squad, I take great pleasure in introducing myself.

GLANCING over my passport, I find that the Honorable Robert Lansing, Ex-secretary of State describes me as follows: Height—6 ft.; hair—dark brown; eyes—brown. I may add that I weigh 175 pounds; own a few bristles on my upper lip and wear an 8½ C shoe. I am still young enough to overlook the word impossible and foolish enough to attempt it. Educated in Paris, I have traveled enough to feel quite at home wherever I happen to hang my hat, and long to hang it somewhere else. Professionally, I am a banker, or maybe a bank clerk; by inclination a loafer and a Parisian, however, and an author by accident. I am anti-prohibitionist, as a matter of fact anti-everything that is anti-something, for I resent being made better than I want to be. I refuse to have virtue forced upon me. I want to fight for it and fall sometimes. *Quand à vous, mesdames!* I like you all—blonds and brunettes, with and without dimples.

During the war I served with the Twenty-Seventh Division and the Intelligence Corps in France.

WELL, here I am, "*à prendre ou à laisser*" as our French friends would say.

I mentioned that I was an author by accident. It is the truth, nothing but the truth. One day, having left one bank and having not yet mustered enough courage to jump in another one at their own terms, I discovered that I was a gentleman of leisure, with much time on my hands. My room-mate was writing a story and by *esprit de corps* I took pencil and paper and sat down. The muses were kind to me; I liked the story and it became a pleasure to write it. Now, the board of censorship composed of my room-mate and a few other friends decided that it should be sent forthwith to an editor, which was done, and it's yours for your liking.

I am glad of this opportunity to pay tribute to those who accepted the dangerous mission of spy and to those men, women and children in occupied France and Belgium who, away from excitement of battle and the glamour of trumpets, overcame seemingly impossible difficulties to help escaped prisoners and furnish invaluable information to the Allies; all those who voluntarily, without hope of recognition, unknown in many cases, braved the firing-squad to serve their country.—HERVÉ SCHWEDERSKY.

DEEP-WATER sailors, here's something for you to pass on. As to those mistakes in Spanish spelling, they are now sins of more than a year ago, we'll confess to 'em without looking 'em up, apologize and that's that. As to the "dollar a year" man mentioned, if the report about him is true, what a dirty traitor he was—and is, if he is still polluting the air of the country he betrayed for his own selfish ends while posing as one of her noble benefactors!. His type would not consider that matter wrong, doubtless, but that's because his type is morally defective.

I am tempted to write every once in a while, when something which especially interests me comes up in one of the yarns, or when something starts at the Camp-Fire. My hesitation is explained by the fact that once upon a time I wandered into your sanctum with a scheme, the discussion of which took up a lot of your time, and which fizzled (in spite of your interest and very active kindness) because I had to fulfill a contract which brought me to Perú before I could even turn my idea over to some abler executive. I refer to the Tropical Tramps Regiment.

I was never more sorry about anything, for besides taking up your time for nothing, I found that the idea had caught on, and for months after I went "up the hill" I got letters from all parts of the

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States, with reference to the project. I answered all that reached me, and tried to explain the causes of my dereliction; but I felt pretty cheap about it all. Perhaps it served me right that when the time came, they turned me down, in spite of National Guard and Navy service. I was told later that it was by an arrangement made with one of the "dollar a year" men in Washington, who did not want any employees of copper companies accepted.

Well, anyway, they got on without me, though I'd much rather have a ribbon than an alibi.

THE things that have made my typewriting fingers itch this time, are two. First of all, the fact that in most American magazines, if any one puts in a few Spanish words they are usually badly spelled and often misapplied. This is a very common fault, and can many times be laid to proof-readers and linotypers, but in a recent number of our magazine was a story that had errors which could only be attributed to the writer. Isn't there some way in which people can be assisted to avoid such errors as spelling the proper name "Nuñez" without the liquid n; or calling a *balsa* which is a raft, a *bolsa* which means purse or sack? There is no use in Mexico, Cuba, Guatemala, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil or Chile of the phrase *mio Dios* so far as my experience goes, although one often hears the expression *"Ay mi Dios."* Even that is not as common however, as *"ay Dios mio."*

These are just two or three samples of several errors in the said story, which otherwise was an excellent piece of imaginative writing. I used to have to do with a periodical published in New York, all of which was in Spanish, and we managed to eliminate errors of that sort, but only by having our proofs very carefully revised and getting hold of a printer who, although Italian, was first-class when it came to setting up Spanish.

THE second thing on my mind, was suggested by one of Mr. Adams' delightful sea-stories, in which he spoke of that great old ship *Thermopylæ*. Although she is mentioned as a wool-clipper, she was also one of the famous tea-clippers, whose races during the years when the clipper was in her glory hung up records which should live forever in the minds of sailor-men and of those who like myself can not resist the hypnotic attraction of the "great mother of all life" and all that has to do with her.

I have recently gotten hold of some data with regard to his wonderful old ship and others of her time and class, which I would like to have verified by a sailor-man who knows, and as an introduction to the points I would like to resolve, it may not come amiss to give some of the dope on the *Thermopylæ*, which was one of the best, from her launch to her "burial."

Thermopylæ was launched Aug. 19, 1868, and on Nov. 7, sailed from Gravesend for Melbourne. She made this trip, pilot to pilot, in 60 days, and from moorings to anchor in Port Phillip in 63 days. The average of her ten best passages to Melbourne, pilot to pilot, is 67 days. On Dec. 31, 1888, bound out to Sydney, she made 358 nautical miles in the 24 hours, running her easting down. In steady quartering breezes she is said to have been able to make 12½ to 13 knots with helm amidships and a boy at the wheel. It is also claimed that a man could walk her decks with a lighted candle in his hand, when she was making 7 knots. She was sold to a Canadian in 1890, by the Aberdeen White Star Line, and even with much reduced sail-plan continued to make some wonderful passages. In 1895 the Portuguese Government got her and, as she was not wholly suitable for their purposes she was towed to sea by two battle-boats and torpedoed. R. I. P.

CUTTY SARK, which was built to beat *Thermopylæ*, was another wonder, and it is said that with a strong beam or quartering breeze she could beat *Thermopylæ or any other ship ever built.*

That statement is made by Mr. Basil Lubbock in his book, "The China Clippers." And yet, Mr. Lubbock, in the same book, page 57, says; "No vessels propelled by wind alone have ever traveled so fast through the water as the Mackay (Donald Mackay of Boston) cracks."

This leads us to remember such ships as the Mackay *Staghound*, *Flying Cloud*, *Sovereign of the Seas*, *Flying Fish*, *Great Republic*, *Westward Ho* and the four ships built for the English Black Ball Line, the *James Baines*, *Donald Mackay*, *Champion of the Seas*, and the *Lightning*.

Concerning this last ship, I have the following extract from an article published some months ago in a New York paper, which seems to prove that she could whip *Thermopylæ* and *Cutty Sark* together. On March 1st, 1854, the second day of her maiden trip Boston to Liverpool, her log is quoted as follows: "Wind south; strong gales; bore away for North Channel; carried away foretopsail and lost jib. Hove log several times and found ship going through water at 18 to 18½ knots. Distance in 24 hours 436 (nautical)." The entire trip consumed 13 days 19½ hours.

ANOTHER marvelous performance was that of the ship *Northern Light*, under the famous Cape Codder, Capt. F. D. Hatch. She has been credited in many publications of the last generation with making the trip from San Francisco to Boston in 76 days, 6 hours.

Is it possible that they built so far ahead of present-day designs that wind could drive a ship at such tremendous speed?

My pipe's out, and it's time to reload and let some one else talk; and I sure would like to have somebody spiel that can give me corroborative evidence of the above, or else smash it up, or tell me some better records, if there are such.

Good hunting to you all!—G. G. LANSING.

THOSE of you living in Charleston, W. Va., can you tell Mr. Chase and us about these relics of Daniel Boone? The letter comes from pretty deep in our cache.

Armel, Colorado.

Having read an article by A. G. Little, of Holdredge, Neb., in Camp-Fire in regard to Daniel Boone's rifle will add *my* mite.

Twenty years ago there was in the museum at the State Capitol in Charleston, W. Va., a rifle said to have been owned by Boone and if I remember rightly also a powder-horn, shot-pouch and hunting-knife. At one time Boone lived for three or four years on the site of what is now known as Kanawha City, W. Va. He represented the county then called Augusta in the Legislature at Richmond, Va.

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Will some reader of Camp-Fire who lives in or near Charleston, look this matter up and tell us what documentary or other proofs there may be in regard to this relic? There are also relics of Tice Vanbibber and other pioneers of the Kanawha Valley. This collection was started by Doctor Hale, a very enthusiastic and reliable collector of pioneer tales and relics. If Dr. Hale vouched for the past history of the gun I would consider it authentic.—J. A. CHASE.

ONE of the West's old-timers who wants to hear from others who knew the old times. Also some data on rattlesnakes. Here's hoping Mr. Hatcher can find time and inclination to tell us more about the past of the West.

Myrtle Point, Oregon.

In the November 10, 1922, number, page 79, you ask how large does a rattlesnake grow. In September, 1874, I belonged to Company E of Texas Rangers and was on a scout after Indians. We camped for dinner at Postoak Springs on head of Home Creek. It is about fifteen miles southwest of where Coleman City now stands. Lieutenant Best was in command. We killed two rattlesnakes—one measured 9 ft. 10 in., and had swallowed a full grown jackrabbit and the other was 9 ft. 4 ins., and had two grown prairie-dogs inside of it. The rattles were worn off and looked broken at the ends. One had nineteen and the other seventeen.

I was a scout with Sheridan's command that found the den of rattlers you speak of in the Wichita Mountains. I am an old-timer of the West. Was two years in Second Mo. Cavalry of the War of the Rebellion. Am now 75 years old. Have driven Texas cattle over all three of the Chisolm Trails from West Texas to Kansas. Have scouted with Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill and Texas Jack and others of frontier fame. Am now living in Oregon and keep a few running short horses for pleasure and profit. Would be glad to hear from any one that drove the long horns and fought Indians and outlaws and helped make the West.—CURLEY HATCHER.

ALL good Irishmen to my rescue. Having Irish blood in me, years ago I read a lot concerning the very ancient history of Ireland and, when Mr. Martin questioned some of Talbot Mundy's statements or quotations concerning the Lia Fail, I was interested and remembered just enough to lead me to ask Mr. Martin for more details. And now I'm in over my depth.

Comrades Martin and Mundy also, in the course of their argument, bring in the Book of Genesis. And there we are, all set for a religious argument. Nothing doing. Since the Bible comes into their discussion, we'll let them voice their opinions on it. They've a right to their opinions and the rest of us have a right to ours, whatever they may be. If any of our chip-carrying corporal's guard write in complaining that our magazine is advocating this or that about the Bible or religion I'll just mail their letters back to them.

Speaking of "good Irishmen" there aren't so many of 'em as there should be. I mean "good" in the sense of knowing Ireland's very splendid past. Tell an Irishman his country led western Europe in learning and civilization for centuries and it'll likely be news to him. For example, there are three Irish girls in our office and not a blamed one of 'em really knows anything about Ireland's ancient glories. So I've given them something to read.

And when it comes to that, how many "good" Americans are there? Our Camp-Fire has learned a good deal about America's history from Hugh Pendexter and others of our writers' brigade, but—well, we had a good deal to learn, most of us.

The gong sounds.

Asbury Park, New Jersey.

In compliance with my promise of to-day I take pleasure in replying to Mr. Mundy's response to my friendly inquiry of earlier date. Let me state first, that my query was based on written history. Neither Mr. Mundy nor I lived in the day of Jacob, nor did we travel with the Scythians in their pilgrimage. We must therefore rely upon legendary or circumstantial evidence for all knowledge *re* the Lia Fail. Mr. Mundy accuses me of being orthodox. I am not. I do not believe there was a general Deluge or in fact any at all. I do not believe that all races were of a common origin or from a common ancestor. I used the commonly accepted date of the so-called "Deluge" as a basis for reckoning time, but there are other methods of attaining my end as I will relate hereafter.

MR. MUNDY'S geological evidence sounds good, but according to my account of "Lia Fail," it came from the Norse countries. Have these countries been surveyed geologically? Has such survey been made to so exact a degree that it can be stated positively that the strata outcropping at Bethel, Palestine, do not continue northward and again come to the surface in the northern continent? Again, did the Assyrian, Greek and Israelitish ironwork differ to such an extent that the mere welding of rings could be distinguished as the work of one or the other race? I think not.

THE mere fact that the College of Heralds records contain data *re* the conveyors of the "Lia Fail" and their descendants is by no means proof. That body came into being at so late a date that its records of such ancient history had necessarily to be based on the same man-written history that Mr. Mundy condemns. The same body records the pedigree of the Royal family back to Adam, as the Irish chronicles trace back practically every Milesian family. Was this pedigree making not done for political reasons?

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In Ireland none that traced not back to the Milesians could rule, thus the pedigrees. Did not England compile its Royal Pedigree that it might rule Ireland more peacefully? Will it not spring upon the world some day a British King of the Jews in Palestine, based on his descent (in a British made pedigree) from the Princess Royal of Judah? But enough of supposition.

WE WILL turn to written history. In no case do I find an account of any race inhabiting Ireland (excepting only one)which has not been traced through various authorities to Magog, son of Japheth, who was son of Noah. (Authorities for the following data—1, Bible; 2, Welsh Polichronicon; 3, *Leabhar dhroma Sneachta* (The Irish White Book); 4, The Irish Book of Invasions; 5, Keating's "History of Ireland," edition printed in 1723; 6, the Psalter of Cashel.)

We will begin with (1) Japheth. We are interested in three of his sons to a certain extent. They were: (2) Magog, of whom hereafter; (3) Tubal whose descendants inhabited Spain at the time the Gadelians went there, and (4) Gomer. From Magog descended two sons—(5) Fatnochda and (6) Baath. From (5) Fatnochda descended the Partholans (5) Fatnochda, his son (7) Fraimant, his son (8) Easru, his son (9) Sru, his son (10) Seara, his son (11) Partholanus who came from Migdonia, Greece, in the year of the world 1978 (Hebrew Calculation), 22 years before the birth of Abraham.

PARTHOLANUS brought with him his wife and three sons, with their wives and one thousand soldiers. They were wiped out by plague after three hundred years of habitation there. (A fishing colony had existed in Ireland for some two hundred years before the Partholans landed, according to some historians, also of descendants of Magog.)

(10) Seara had, beside Partholanus a son (12) Tait, whose son (13) Pain, or Pamp, was father of (14) Ardnamhain, father of (15) Nemedius. Nemedius came from the country bordering on the Euxine Sea with 34 ships, 1020 men and his sons. His descendants were called Nemedians and it was during his colonization of Ireland that a fleet of African pirates under Bog, Robhog, Rodan and Ruibhne settled in the north of Ireland. These were of a race called the Fomhoraice, descendants of Shem. The Africans conquered the whole of Ireland. Most of the Nemedians, taking ship (under leadership of Simon Breac, son of Starin, son of Nemedius), went to Greece where they were enslaved.

THESE remained in Greece for 216 years, when, breaking away from their oppressors, 5000 seized Greek ships and returned to Ireland.

The pedigree of the five leaders is given as follows: (15) Nemedius, his son (16) Starin, his son (17) Beoan, his son (18) Arghlamh, his son (19) Simon, his son (20) Oirtheachta, his son (21) Goisdean, his son (22) Orthoirbh, his son (23) Triobhuaith, his son (24) Loich, his son (25) Dela, father of the five leaders—Slaigne, Rughraidhe, Gann, Geanann and Seangann.

The descendants of this invasion of Ireland were known as Firbolgs. They found in Ireland a mixture of African pirate and Nemedian, who, as would appear natural, had intermarried.

Now from Nemedius' other son, (26) Jarbhanel Faidah, descended the Tuatha de Danans. His son was (27) Iboath, (28) Baath, (29) Eana, (30) Tabhairn, (31) Tait, (32) Alladi, (33) Jonoao, (34) Neid, (35) Ealathan, (36) Dealbaoith, his daughter, (37) Danan, whose sons—Bryan, Juchor and Juchorba were leaders of the Tuatha de Danans.

Now the pedigree of the Milesians goes back to (6) Baath, son of (2) Magog. The son of Baath was (38) Fenius Farsa, King of Scythia, whose son (39) Niul narried Scota, daughter of the Pharaoh Cingris. Niul's son was (40) Gadelas and the line down to Milesius of Spain was as follows:—(41) Easru son of Gadelas, his son (42) Sru, his son (43) Heber Scott, his son (44) Beogamhuin, (45) Ogamhain, his son (46) Tait, his son (47) Adnamoin, his son (48) Lamhfionn, (the next six generations were Lords of Gothia) his son (49) Heber Glunn Fionn, (50) Taobhar Glas, (51) Neannuall, (52) Nuagatt, (53) Allord, (54) Deagotha, (55) Brathia, (56) Breogan, (57) Bille, King of Spain, (58) Milesius, King of Spain, from whom descended the present Irish, the blood mingled with Firbolg, African Pirate and Tuatha de Danan.

THUS end the genealogies of the Irish race up to the time of the Milesian conquest. Now we will return to the Nemedians and the Lia Fail. I have stated that the Nemedians, under Simon Breac, went to Greece. Part came back to Ireland and were called Firbolgs. The other part remained in Greece at Achaia, on the borders of Baeotia near Thebes. (Authority—Pomponius Mela.) They went from that country to avoid its Assyrian conquerors and went to Norway and Denmark under Nuadhah Airgiodlamh, a descendant of Nemedius, and thence to the North of Scotland where they remained seven years, thence to Ireland.

In Denmark, the tribe later called Tuatha de Danans founded four cities, Falais, Gorias, Finnias and Murias. From Falais, when, they went to Scotland, they carried the stone called "Lia Fail" (from which stone the city's name) (and from which also the name "Innisfail" for Ireland), thence taking the stone to Ireland where it remained until, to quote Keating, "Fergus the Great, son of Earca, having subdued the Kingdom of Scotland, resolved to be crowned upon it, for that purpose he sent his messengers to his brother, Murtough (the son of Earca, a descendant from Heremon," etc.) for the "Lia Fail." This was *circa* 513 A. D. This Fergus was the first monarch of the Gadelian race to govern Scotland who was crowned upon it. The stone was placed in the Abbey of Scone where it remained until seized by Edward I, and was carried to Westminster Abbey, the crown of England at once passing to the Stuarts, descendants of Heber, son of Milesius. Other venerated antiques carried from Denmark by the Tuatha de Danans were the sword and spear of Luighaidh Lamhfhada and the Caldron called "Coire an Daghdha."

IT IS a curious fact that all ancient Irish chroniclers agree that the stone was brought into Ireland by the Tuatha de Danans, even the Milesian historians before the time of St. Patrick, who would have claimed that honor for their own race, if possible. Could it have been brought into Ireland *via* Spain by the Milesians, as asserted by Mr. Mundy if it were once in the care of Moses? On

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what ancient writing does Mr. Mundy base his statement?

The Hebrews were descendants from Shem. The Scythians were descended from Magog. (They were anciently called Magogi.) Their religions were totally different. If the "Lia Fail" was the stone of Jacob, would it be of sacred significance to the Scythians, who knew naught of Jacob?

The Pharaoh Cingris was the Pharaoh of the Exodus. By his invitation, Niul, son of Fenius Farsa, King of Scythia, entered Egypt, where he married Cingris's daughter, Scota, and by the grace of the Pharaoh, ruled the lands of Capacirunt on the Red Sea. Their son was (40) Gadelas, ancestor of the Milesians.

Moses, with his followers of the Exodus, encamped near Capacirunt, and it was at this time that, by the saving of the life of Gadelas by Moses, the latter and Niul came into contact. But Moses and his host moved on. Niul and his descendants remained until Sru (42), his great grandson, was driven from the country by Cingris' successor, the Pharaoh an Tuir (authority—Walsingham in his work "Hypdogma"). Sru went to Scythia (Crete) where he died.

During the time of (47) Adnamoin, the Gadelians were driven from Scythia and removed to the territories of the Amazons where they remained a year, then set sail in three ships and landed in Gothland where they remained for several generations and removed to Spain. Thus written history shows only one point of contact between the Hebrews and the Gadelians and that very brief. Surely, the "Lia Fail," if carried by Moses, was too greatly venerated by the Hebrews for it to be intrusted to a Scythian prince on an Egyptian territorial throne.

A CHART is attached to this article showing the accepted pedigrees of the Tuatha de Danans and Milesians. In my mind a given name herein represented a tribe. That is, a family under a patriarch. Two, three, four or more generations may therefore be represented by only one name, that of the Patriarch or leader of his epoch. Thus 24 Patriarchal generations are shown from the tribe of Japheth to the de Danan ancestors, and 24 from the tribe of Japheth to Milesius. The Tuatha de Danans ruled Ireland for 197 years before the Milesians made their conquest, which was 283 years after the meeting of Moses and Gadelas, which took place in the year of the death of the Pharaoh Cingris in the Red Sea. (Psalter of Cashel.) Ireland was known as "Innisfail" (Island of the Stone "Lia Fail") before the Milesian invasion. (Hector Boetius in his history of Scotland calls the stone "Saxum Fatale.")

The de Danans, as is shown by the chart, did not or rather could not have come into contact with the Hebrews under Moses in any time of their history. The Gadelians, or rather the ancestors of the Gadelians did, but it was at a time when they were allied to the Egyptians, and this alliance, in a manner continued throughout the wanderings of the Gadelians until the time of Milesius at least, as his wife was another Scota, daughter of the Pharaoh Nectonibus. Did the Hebrews at this time entrust their sacred stone to the care of an Egyptian ally?

This is my reasoning based on man-written history. I am open to conviction, however and nothing would please me more than to find some authority or base for the assumption of Mr. Mundy that the Hebrews and Milesian Irish could have both found sacred a stone which could have had significance to only one of two totally different religions and races.—GEORGE CASTOR MARTIN.

Here is the chart M . Martin enclosed:

1 Japheth		
2 Magog		
5 Fatnochda	6 Baath	
7 Fraimant		
8 Easru		38 Fenius Farsa Pharaoh Cingris
9 Sru		*39 Niul *married* Scota
10 Seara		*40 Gadelas
11 Partholanus	12 Tait	41 Easru
	13 Paim	42 Sru
	14 Aronamhain	43 Heber Scot
	15 Nemedius	44 Beogamhuin
	26 Jarbhanell Faidh	45 Ogamhain
	27 Ibaath	46 Tait
	28 Baath	47 Adnamoin
	29 Eana	48 Lamhfionn
	30 Tabhairn	49 Heber-glunn Fionn
	31 Tait	50 Taobharglas
	32 Alladi	51 Neannuall
	33 Jonoao	52 Nuagatt
	34 Neid	53 Allord
	35 Ealathan	54 Deagotha
	36 Dealbaoith	55 Bratha
	37 Danan (*Fem.*)	56 Breogan
	†Bryan Juchor Juchorba	57 Bille, *King of Spain*
		58 Milesius, *King of Spain*

*Contemporaries of Moses, Accepted History.
†Conveyors of the "Lia Fail" from Denmark, via Scotland, to Ireland according to the Irish Chronicles.

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MR. MUNDY'S letter follows:

It is difficult to answer because I have no books on the subject near me and can obtain none in this city. However there are one or two points that appear to me obvious and that I think you will concede readily as a matter of ordinary justice.

In the first place you speak of "Mr. Mundy's geological evidence" etc. It isn't my evidence; it is evidence obtained by me from library sources and based, if memory serves, on Lord Kitchener's Survey of Palestine. I am not responsible for it, and refuse even to pretend to be.

YOU ask whether the Norse countries have been surveyed geologically. The answer is yes, and extremely thoroughly. The prevalence of valuable mines in those countries, iron ore specially, led to their being surveyed in detail sooner than almost any other section of Europe. You would be able to check this matter up easily by writing to Washington where all such statistics are on file in Government Bureaus. A study of the map leads me to think it extremely improbable that one formation of rock should continue northward from Palestine all the way to the Norse Countries of which you speak.

Again regarding the iron work, if the Greek, Assyrian, and Israelitish iron work would not differ to such an extent that the mere welding of rings could be distinguished as the work of one or the other race, then the iron used almost certainly would differ in quality; but as to this I am unable to be definite without my books of reference and can only refer you to a book entitled "The Coronation Stone," which is sold if not published, by A. A. Beauchamp, 603 Boylston Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

I can not insist too frequently that the theory regarding the Lost Ten Tribes is none of my invention but is one which is believed in by numbers of educated and serious people in various countries. There is an extensive library of books on the subject, all of which give references and most of which base their argument mainly on history as given in the Old Testament.

YOU say that the mere fact that the College of Heralds records contain data of the Lia Fail is by no means proof. What would you consider proof? You may just as easily say that the Bible proves nothing, or that nothing can be proved which is not able to be microscopically analyzed by chemists. But even chemists differ among themselves and include in their ranks brilliant thinkers who are regarded by the rest as heretics, until the heretics in turn become orthodox and take their own turn at excommunicating some one else. I should say there are no records in the world more carefully kept, more interesting, or more credible than those in the care of the College of Heralds; but that is, of course, merely my personal opinion.

My own opinion is that any pedigree traced back to Adam is absurd. A study of the Book of Genesis, which I have made with some particularity by the light of treatises available but seldom used, leads me to think the book is wholly esoteric and should be interpreted symbolically. That however once more is opinion.

When we turn to written history, as you have done in considerable and apparently very careful detail, it becomes merely a question as to whose history we shall turn to and whose we shall ignore. The histories that I used as authority when making that very sketchy outline of the Ten Tribes theory used in Camp-Fire are all obtainable from Mr. Beauchamp and are to be found in some public libraries.

I AGREE with you in not believing there was ever any Deluge in the literal sense that is believed in by those who read the Book of Genesis literally. Nearly all the names in Genesis should be taken to mean, probably, races of people.

Your account of the settlement of Ireland by various peoples is far from complete, if the authors on whom I depended when outlining the Ten Tribes theory are accurate. According to them the Isles of the Sea referred to in Isaiah are undoubtedly the British Isles. The tribe of Dan was a seafaring race whose ships used to visit the British Isles regularly long before Jeremiah took the Prince of Judah to Ireland along with the Ark and the Lia Fail.

There is also the peculiar fact that the very name British (in Hebrew Brith-esh) means the "Covenant People;" and that several hundred words in the English language have unquestionable Hebrew roots. On the other hand I have come across an authority in whom I place more than a little faith, who gravely doubts that the Ten Tribes ever existed.

I AM unwilling to commit myself to belief in the Ten Tribes theory. I do say it is interesting if true, and that its proponents make out a very strong case—in fact a great deal stronger case than most historians do for many theories that have become universally accepted. My own opinion is that those Irish genealogies are even more misty and unintelligible than those of the Old Testament. They undoubtedly mean something; they are interesting and undoubtedly important; but their interpretation to my mind is in doubt. Some day when we are all wiser and know how to read history with real breadth of view we may understand what the old genealogies mean.

I have been studying ancient history a great deal lately; so can appreciate the enthusiasm with which you attack the subject. When I twitted you with being orthodox I assure you nothing was further from my intention than to give offense; I am much too fond of free opinions freely held to dare refuse the same privilege to anybody else, and I would respect you less if I thought you were willing to change an opinion merely because it differed from my own. Without free opinions the world would very soon become an impossible place to live in.

Since you are so interested in this subject may I suggest that you write to A. A. Beauchamp for whatever book he considers the best that deals with it; you could then very swiftly determine whether in your judgment that line of evidence was worth pursuing further or not.

Pardon me for not quoting chapter and verse in this reply, to your fully detailed letter; as explained, my books are not available at the moment.—TALBOT MUNDY.

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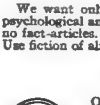

Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the first issue of each month. Address letters regarding stations to J. Cox.

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(*See Lost Trails in the next issue*)

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(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

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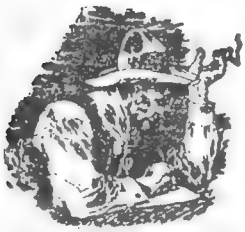

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or informarion is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do not write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1, 2. **The Sea. In Two Parts**
3, 4. **Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts**
5, 6. **New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts**
7. **Australia and Tasmania**
8. **Malaysia, Sumatra and Java**
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11. **Hawaiian Islands and China**
12. **Japan**
13—15. **Asia. In Three Parts**
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24. **Turkey and Asia Minor**
25, 26. **Balkans. In Two Parts**
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Aviation
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Mining and Prospecting
Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
Standing Information
Lost Trails

What Tasmania Offers the Fruit-Raiser

IS £40 per acre yearly any inducement?

Question:—"Please give me some information on Tasmania for farming and fruit-growing. If you can give me Government folders or other data on the resources I'd be very much indebted to you."—GEO. AVIS, Perry Siding, B. C., Can.

Answer, by Mr. Goldie:—The quality of the fruit produced in Tasmania is not surpassed in any part of the world. English travelers often say that they do not regain the true apple flavor, which they left behind in the Old Country, until they reach this island; and the high prices that our fruit brings in the English markets show conclusively that it must be of extremely good quality.

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The returns per acre from a well-cared-for orchard are much higher than in other forms of agricultural production. Such an orchard should yield an average of 300 bushels per acre one year with another; and, allowing a clear return of 2s. 6d. per bushel after all expenses have been paid—which is below rather than above the usual estimate—it gives a return of £37-15s., or nearly £40 per acre. These figures, of course, refer to a properly planted and properly looked-after orchard, in which there are no obsolete or unproductive trees, as is sometimes the case, especially in old-established properties.

This return, although so good, does not entail any necessity for high-class land. In fact, the land generally employed for fruit-growing is of poor quality, and sometimes of little use for any other purpose. It is a very common thing in Tasmania, especially in the moister parts of it, to see valuable orchards flourishing on areas that were previously barren heaths, worthless tea-tree flats or poor, sparsely timbered land from which no one in other circumstance could draw a living. But once such areas are cleared, drained, and planted with fruit-trees, bright and cheerful homesteads arise like magic, schools and post-offices spring into being, and the previously deserted country begins to take on an appearance of bustle and prosperity.

An orchard in Tasmania is more dependent upon the character of the man who owns it than upon the nature of the soil it is planted in. In fact, orchards may be planted in any soil if the system of pruning and cultivation followed is properly adapted to the particular local conditions.

Fruit-growing as carried on in Tasmania is an ideal occupation for any one who possesses a small assured income, which he is desirous of increasing by some means which will enable him at the same time to lead a healthy outdoor life.

For the man with a small capital who wishes to engage in some agricultural or horticultural industry and who is willing to work, it offers a very good investment. The land can be obtained cheaply and on very advantageous terms from the Government, and the cost of clearing and planting the trees is the heaviest item.

Many orchardists who start in a small way grow strawberries and other small fruits amongst their trees, or plant separate patches of black currants and raspberries, and thus keep the pot boiling until the orchard becomes profitable. But to go into the business upon a scale which would make it worth doing at all, the would-be orchardist must possess a certain amount of capital, and be prepared to maintain himself for at least five years, either by his own labor or from his own resources, before he can hope for any appreciable return.

There is a certain class of very successful fruit-growers in Tasmania who started in their own phraseology with nothing but their bare hands. These were invariably natives of the State, men skilled in bush work, who labored for other people and put their spare time and earnings into orchards of their own. Many properties formed in this way are now amongst the most productive and valuable in the State, and the owners are reaping a rich reward for the noble courage and constancy which they displayed in their earlier years. Such properties as these, however, take a long time to get together, and few would care to undergo the unremitting toil and privation which they represent.

The new arrival, landing in Tasmania with some capital available which he desires to put into a remunerative industry, can not do much better than go in for fruit-growing. He must always remember that his success or failure will depend quite as much upon himself as upon the nature or situation of his land, and he must be prepared for some years of work and economy before he can look for any return from his outlay. Once, however, his orchard is properly planted and has come to bearing age, he may look forward to independence and a comfortable living, and perhaps in the future to moderate wealth.

There are no fortunes made at orcharding nowadays, any more than there are at other forms of land industry, unless it is carried on on a scale which means a large amount of initial capital; but there is now, and will always be, a very comfortable living in it.

It will be a question for the new arrival to consider whether he should take up and plant new land or purchase an orchard in bearing. It is one upon which it is rather difficult to express any clear opinion, and the immigrant will have to be guided entirely by his own judgment.

Orchardists are now so prosperous that as a rule few properties come into the market of any real value, and any that do command high prices are generally at once snapped up. On the other hand, there are some properties that are always for sale, every new owner trying to get rid of them as quickly as possible. It is needless to say that such places as these are not worth having, and can prove only a source of loss and disappointment. Many of these orchards have been originally badly laid out and planted with worthless trees; or they may be full of obsolete and useless varieties, or in a situation where it is very difficult to get the fruit to a train or jetty.

If the intending orchardist can get the opportunity of acquiring an orchard in bearing, or one that has been already cleared and planted, at anything like a reasonable figure, he would be wise to take it, provided that the property is what it is represented to be, and will stand expert inspection. He will be saved some years of waiting, and will receive a much quicker return for his outlay.

It sometimes happens that a good property which is not for sale can be acquired on lease. This is a plan that commends itself in most cases, provided that the rent is low enough to enable the tenant to get a fair return for his labor. The rent required in such cases does not appear to be based on any fixed rule, and depends rather upon what the tenant is willing to pay.

Of course, a fixed agreement has to be come to in regard to the proper maintenance of the property, and due allowance has to be made in regard to improvements undertaken by the tenant. Most fruit-growers in Tasmania, however, prefer to be freeholders; and land can be acquired on such favorable terms from the Government that there is not much inducement—for orchardists at any rate—to be otherwise than the absolute owners of the places which they work.

Practically all parts of Tasmania seem to be suited to fruit-growing as long as they are not too dry or too elevated. The main essential is that the locality chosen should be within a convenient distance of some means of conveyance, such as a railway or water-carriage. Apples and pears are

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not benefited by being carted long distances, as the continual jolting bruises them more or less and interferes with their keeping-qualities, thus detracting from their value.

The first business necessary in bringing an orchard into existence is to acquire the land; and a little time given to looking around in this regard will be well spent by the intending orchardist. This preliminary step is of great importance, and upon it depends some very vital considerations. It is essential that the site chosen should be within reasonably convenient access of a means of communication, so that the fruit may be got to market or the port of export without undue expense or loss of time in carting, or injury to the fruit itself. Therefore a site should be within as few miles as possible of a jetty or railway station.

Many fruit-growers now have to cart their fruit ten to fifteen miles before they can get it aboard the steamer or train; but much loss of time and expense is incurred, and the quality, especially the keeping-power of it, is not enhanced. Land can generally be found within more reasonable distances; and the Lands Department and its various officers in different localities are always ready to supply the fullest information of the subject.

Around the old-established fruit-growing centers the land suited to the purpose has generally passed into private hands, and for any that is for sale high prices are demanded. It is better, except in special circumstances, for the intending orchardist to take up land under the Government, and clear and plant it for himself.

The land laws of Tasmania are extremely liberal. Any person of 18 years of age and upward may select an area not exceeding 200 acres of first-class agricultural land, 300 acres of second-class agricultural land, and 600 acres of third-class land, provided he does not already hold land on credit or has not purchased the maximum area allowed. A person who has become a purchaser of less than the maximum area is allowed to make a further selection of not more than two lots, provided that the maximum area allowed for each class of land is not exceeded.

In regard to the terms of purchase, the price of first-class agricultural land is not less than £1 per acre, with one-third of that price added as a premium for credit, which extends over a period of eighteen years, the payments being made as follows:

A cash deposit of 2d. an acre at the time of sale, an instalment of 3d. an acre for each of the two following years, and 1s. for four years, 1s. 6d. for four years, and 2s. an acre annually for the remaining eight years.

For second-class land 10s. an acre is the minimum price, with one-third added for credit, the period of which is fourteen years. Cash at time of sale, 4d. an acre; first and second years, 6d. an acre, and for the remaining twelve years, 1s. an acre.

For third-class land the price is not less than 5s. an acre, with one-third added for credit, which extends over fourteen years. The first payment is a cash deposit of 2d. an acre at time of sale, two annual instalments of 3d. an acre, and 6d. an acre annually for the remaining twelve years.

What are known as "Homestead Acres," of 50 acres or under, may be acquired on still more liberal terms; but they are to be selected only on first-class land. Few people who contemplate fruit-growing, however, will require more than 50 acres of land, and on most first-class blocks of this size 15 to 25 acres can be found suitable for fruit-trees.

Small and General Farming

There is a great scope for the small and general farmer in Tasmania. First-class land can be acquired on such easy terms that very little capital is required to make a start, and there are many branches of the business from which a return can be received as soon as a little land has been cleared.

The general conditions of life in bush settlements are now much easier than they were in past years, as new roads and railways have facilitated communication and the general spread of education has raised the standard of living. A bush farmer may now lead a very enjoyable existence compared to what he did in the past, as there are few localities to which most of the conveniences of civilization have not penetrated.

The land laws generally are administered in the most liberal spirit, and no one is deprived of his selection for failure to comply with the conditions of settlement without very strong reasons. It is the policy of the Government to promote settlement in every possible way, and while speculative land-grabbing is blocked as far as possible, the *bona-fide* settler is welcomed and every assistance given him.

Mixed farming on the type of first-class land that is now available in Tasmania generally includes every branch of agriculture that is followed in the State. There is a little dairying, a little fruit-growing, a little stock-raising, and often a good deal of poultry-keeping. Forage crops and potatoes are grown, and pigs are kept.

Sooner or later the selector finds out what his land is best suited for, or what pays best in his particular locality, and makes a speciality of it. Sheep-farming in a small way offers considerable chances of success in suitable localities. There are no predaceous animals to be guarded against.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in alternate issues of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

New Orleans to Tulsa by Water

A TRIP that's feasible most of the way, *via* two historic and interesting streams:

Question:—"Would it be difficult to make a trip up the Mississippi from New Orleans to the Arkansas River, and up the Arkansas into Oklahoma, say about as far as Tulsa?

Please tell me what obstacles to navigation one would meet with on the Arkansas, and what draft power-boat could be used. Also I would like to know whether there would be any license required to hunt on the way up, and whether game wardens and police would investigate your boat and cause trouble if they should happen to find a few squirrels or a partridge in your grub locker.

Please tell me the time it would take in the most practical boat you could suggest for the trip.

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There will be three people in boat.

If this is published, please withhold my name."—— ——, New Orleans.

Answer, by Mr. Zerr:—Your trip to Tulsa could be made for the greater distance by water and the balance by train, which would cut expenses considerably. Here is some official dope:

The Arkansas River is 1,460 miles long, with a drainage area of 161,000 square miles. It rises in the central part of Colorado and empties in the Mississippi River at the southeastern corner of Arkansas. It is navigable to Neosho (Grand) River, Okla., below which its fall per mile is to Fort Smith 1.13 feet; to Little Rock, 0.82 feet; to the mouth 0.62 feet.

Over the navigable portion the width at bank-full stage ranges from 500 to 2,600 feet, or an average of 1,800 feet. It narrows toward the mouth of the river. Throughout its entire course its low-water bed is very unstable; and below Little Rock, caving banks are always present on one side or the other.

At ordinary low water the stages and distances from the mouth are as follows:

	Feet	Miles
Little Rock	4.5 to 5	173.4
Dardanelle	4 to 5	261.4
Fort Smith	3.5 to 4	367.7
Mouth of Grand	2 to 2.5	460.8

The depth given would give you an idea of what draft boat to get, as it also depends on the amount of luggage.

Game laws vary, and would advise to ask along the way. This would assure you of playing safe. As to time: Well, it depends on the boat. Remember, you are going up-stream, possibly against a stiff current.

If I can be of further service, write.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Going to Alaska

THE less fuss and feathers a man makes, and the more money he has when he lands, the better off he'll be:

Question:—"I am a young man, and ever since I have been discharged from the Army I have not been satisfied for a moment. At the present time I am working in a wholesale hardware house on the inside, and it does not agree with me at all. In fact I have a hunch that if I do not get out in the open soon I am going to contract a case of T. B.

Well, the first I want to know is the best way to get into Alaska and also the best season of the year to go. Most people go in by steamer, do they not? But I also understand that there is an overland route.

If you go by steamer what is the best port to sail from and the best place to land? Then what equipment do you need? And what are the comparative prices of food and necessities as compared with prices in the U. S.? I also understand that it is difficult to secure passage on a steamer in the early Spring as most people go in that season.

Would you give the names and locations of some of the biggest concerns in the country? And do you think it would be difficult to secure work with them? Just how much money would it take to get into the country and buy equipment? What wages are paid to skilled men?

No doubt you will think some of these questions foolish but I suppose you are used to them, and I hope you will give me all the information you can or refer me to some books that will give me the information I wish to obtain."—James O. Trotter, Knoxville, Tenn.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—Take all the money you can rake together, go to Seattle after reading up on the Department of the Interior literature—gratis from Washington—and take a boat to the port you select after talking to Seattle people. It's cheaper to get to coast than to interior points.

Take no outfit. When you get to Alaska, look around and learn the country and work as you see fit and can.

Plan nothing. You'll be better off. There are many large companies comparatively speaking, trading, mining, salmon-canning, etc., but I don't know that you could get a job in advance. You might. If so, Seattle is the place.

There will be much competition, but you might land a job, as most of the people that wander up there every year are of the ignorant laboring class. It costs to live in Alaska about the same as in the States, but wages are higher somewhat.

You will find no difficulty in getting passage if you come out a week or two ahead of the sailings. Say arrive in Seattle from the first to the middle of May, or earlier if you are going to go to a coast point.

Don't dream of the overland trip. No one goes that way now except one or two lunatics who leave their bones on the way.

This doesn't look like an answer to your letter; but it covers it carefully, and is the best advice I can give you. Details would only confuse. This is the essence of all I know of the country, and of six years' experience spent in advising people like you.

Learning the Radio Game

A FINE way to see the world, with a full stomach and money in your pocket:

Question:—"I am after information on the radio game. I am twenty-two years old and have worked at all kinds of outdoor work all over the West; eighth-grade education. Don't know much about electricity. Now my questions:

1. Could I go to some school and learn radio work?
2. I am slow but steady and a pretty fair plugger at work. How long would it take?
3. Wages? Both land and on ships.
4. If a man had a job on a ship would he be allowed to land and look around while in a foreign port?
5. Would you give me the name of some school?
6. Do any schools place a man on a job when he finishes school?

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I enclose a stamped, addressed envelop. If this is published in 'A. A.' please hold back my name." —— ——, Wauneta, Neb.

Answer, by Mr. McNicol:—Answering your questions in the order submitted:

1. Yes, there are several schools where radio is taught, but they are a long way from Wauneta. Are there not one or two radio amateurs in your vicinity with whom you could get in touch for the purpose of mutual study and practise? You could for a relatively small outlay purchase a radio receiving-set for listening to radio-telegraph signals, and a sending-key, buzzer outfit to be used in learning the code. You could then take a correspondence radio course, say from the I. C. S. at Scranton, Pa., and in this way learn the game without leaving home.

Of course, it might be well after you had made some progress to take a short course in a school (Omaha perhaps) and then try the Department of Commerce examination.

2. It might take you from six to ten months to learn.

3. Ship places range from $60 to $125 per month, with berth and meals. Shore positions from $100 to $200 per month, paying your own bills.

4. Yes, ships lie in foreign ports long enough to give the radio operators sufficient time to "see the town."

5. Radio Institute of America, 331 New Call Bldg., San Francisco.

6. Yes, the schools usually are able to secure positions for competent graduates.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose full return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Bass of Myer's Cave

SWIFTLY the automobilist is fishing out the best places in Ontario:

Question:—"I am planning a two weeks' fishing-trip by auto into Ontario but am not acquainted with the right location or the necessary information so that I can be assured of a successful trip. Will you kindly help me out by supplying me with some definite data as to where to go and when to secure some real bass and 'lunge fishing? As my time is short I naturally want it used to the best advantage and not on a wild-goose chase.

Our party will consist of four or five couples, and we can either stop at a hotel or rent a cottage or if better come prepared to camp. Can you suggest a good place? Otter Lake near Brockville has been suggested to us, but we do not know a thing about the fishing there, or anywhere else for that matter. We are leaving it entirely to you. Any maps, information or help of any kind will be greatly appreciated. I am enclosing 8c. in stamps to cover postage."—WALLACE J. GECK, Rochester, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Moore:—Last week a friend of mine and I traveled eighty-two miles north for trout, and while we did not get exactly skunked, we came mighty close to it. The same obtains to the fishing all through this district. And the cause of the scarcity is the automobile. Any place that you can reach by car can be reached by the other fellow, and as a result good fishing-spots of a couple of years back are good no longer.

Maskinonge-fishing is out of the question unless you try the St. Lawrence River and the Thousand Islands. Now as regards bass. There is good bass-fishing in the bay here at times, but it is hard to dope out when that best time is. The bass and 'lunge seasons will not be open until June 16th, so you have a little time yet to choose a spot.

Last year four of us motored seventy miles north to Myer's Cave, where we got fifty bass in two days. That is the best place I know of at writing, but you will have to take three kinds of bait—dew-worms, crabs and frogs. You had better camp out there. This place, on a string of lakes, with little else but black bass in sight, can be reached through Belleville, Tweed, Flinton. It is in the township of Barrie, Lennox and Addington County, of which Kingston is the county town.

I am not very sure whether you can make Myer's Cave by way of Kingston, so I am not suggesting that route. Garages might tell you if it can be done. The way I suggest is through Napanee, Deseronto, Shannonville, Tweed, Flinton, Cloyne.

Unfortunately I am unable to send you a map, but if you will send ten cents to J. E. Chalifour, Chief Geographer, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, and ask him to send you the Kingston Sheet, Topographical Survey Map, you will have what you need.

Now, I'm not going to say that the Myer's Cave district is a sure-fire hit for bass, but it has been good, and you will have to take a chance. It is possible that you might be housed there. Write Chas. McGregor, Myer's Cave, Ont., and find out for sure. You will be able to get boats there.

Remember you must have a non-resident angler's license—any game overseer will fit you up, or same may be obtained by writing to the Deputy Minister, Game and Fisheries, Toronto, Ont.

No more than eight bass per man per day—bass under ten inches must be returned to the water.

Chances in Portuguese East

NONE:

Question:—"I kindly ask for information regarding the following:

The life, opportunities, expenses, climate and trade of Portuguese East Africa.

I am a young banker by profession with knowledge of present-day business. I am a lover of tropical climes, having lived in Trinidad, B. W. I., for a few years."—D. D. DUNSIRE, Toronto, Ont., Canada.

Answer, by Mr. Waring:—You do not say whether it is your intention to follow your present occupation if you went out to Africa, nor do you make mention of any other pursuit which you would follow.

However, in any case Portuguese Africa at the present time is not to be recommended for opportunities for any one, with or without capital. The official language of the country is of course Portuguese, and you would find it difficult in getting into anything without a working knowledge of it. The opportunities at best are few, and the country is not as progressive as it should be.

The climate is very hot and enervating for Europeans, and from two to three years is the usual

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length of stay. You would find it quite different from Trinidad. I have, near Mozambique, seen the thermometer get to 116 degrees in the shade. Fever, of course, is prevalent along the coast, but with care in diet and hygiene one can escape it for a time.

I am sorry that I can not give you a more favorable report, but such is my latest information from friends out there.

How to Catch Wise Pike, Bass, Cat

PATIENCE, skill and the right bait ought to bring the wariest of them to bank:

Question:—"There is a pond a short distance from where I live where I go fishing sometimes. The fish are mostly pike, bass and catfish. Maybe I am a jonah, for I see other people take out quite a number while I am unable to obtain any. I use the spoon trolling bait on the pike and have no luck. The bass and catfish absolutely refuse to bite.

The pond is about four hundred feet long and very deep and also thickly vegetated. It is situated near a railroad where there is a lot of traffic.

Any information you could give regarding kind of bait, depth of line, time, etc., would be greatly appreciated by a Canadian girl."—VERA TURKINGTON, Toronto, Ont., Can.

Answer, by Mr. Thompson:—Probably you have not tried bait-casting with a lure that runs deep. Naturally your fish are pretty wise from traffic being close; but first of all I would keep well out of sight and cast toward the weed beds and pockets, giving my lure action the instant it touches the water. The wooden baits are very good and the spinners too, but give them action and try to do casting from as far a distance as possible. When the fish are close to the weed beds and the latter are in the shallows use surface lures; when they are down deep use underwater lures.

For catfish a dead minnow, beef and mussels are about as good as anything. Go to casting when you have no luck trolling. You will find fish close to the weeds and the shallows very early in the morning and late in the evening. You might try your luck at fly fishing.

Fox-Farming

BROTHER SANGSTER is pessimistic. Later we'll hear from a correspondent who is not. I have his letter now, all scheduled for printing:

Question:—"I take your name from the 'Ask Adventure' pages, and while I notice you do not answer questions relative to trapping for profit, believe you would be willing to direct me to some firm who could give me the desired information.

As a result of his overseas experience a pal of mine must of necessity have some light outdoor means of gaining a livelihood and believes that he could make a success of a fox-farm, and I understand that breeding foxes with information as to their care, etc., may be secured in the Canadian countries. If possible, and the chance of success is fair, a bunch of his old friends would be glad to chip in and give him a start. He has some land in northern Michigan which is not good enough to grow a mortgage but on which he believes he could grow some fur-bearing animals, including mink and fox, whose pelts would be marketable.

I am enclosing self-addressed envelop and stamps, and if you could consistently direct us to the proper source of information it would be appreciated by us all."—A. K. SILVERNAIL, Detroit, Mich.

Answer, by Mr. Sangster:—Frankly from what I know of the fur-farming game to date I advise against it as nobody, save a few in the East, has made it a financial success. At least don't attempt the fox-raising; very few, and only those who understand fox thoroughly, have succeeded. He might try muskrat, mink, skunk with better prospects of success, if the land is suitable.

Fox-farming, as stated above, has not proved a success save with a few exceptions. I personally know a dozen men who have tried it—men with the study of fox and their food, etc., to an extent they were fairly well qualified—yet they couldn't make it go.

Write F. T. D. Chambers, Dept. of Col'n, M. & F., Quebec, P. Q., Can., for any data on fur-farming and where you can obtain data you seek. My advice is, as already stated, not to have your pal go into this with any large expectation of making it a success. Sorry to be so pessimistic.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Moosehead Lake

HOW the Pine Tree State solons coin jobs for their hardy constituents:

Question:—"A party of four of us are planning on a hunting-trip to Maine for deer. We are not familiar with the country, therefore the following questions.

Is it necessary to have a guide in all sections? We prefer being alone. What do guides charge, and how should we go about it to employ one?

Would like to make camp on some lake or pond. How about Moosehead? Isn't there a deserted lumber camp? If not we have two 12 x 14 tents. Can we hire a boat?

How near the place that you recommend would we be able to travel by auto, and is there a place where we can store same?

We want to eliminate expenses as much as possible."—F. G. WINNEWISSER, Springfield, Mass.

Answer, by Dr. Hathorne:—The game laws of the State say that non-residents of the State, when camping and building fires *on wild land* when engaged in fishing or hunting, must be accompanied by a registered guide. Guides charge from three dollars to six dollars per day, and expenses, and one guide must not have more than five in a party.

If you went to Moosehead Lake on your hunting-trip you could secure a guide for that region by writing to one of the names I enclose. I know of no deserted lumber-camp you could engage. I should say a 12 x 14 tent would be large enough for your party.

I think probably you could hire a boat or canoe at Greenville Junction at the foot of the lake.

You could travel direct to the above town by auto, and there are garages there where you could store your car.

You will find plenty of game in that section, and can engage a guide after you reach there.

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Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A Yankee Ship and a Yankee Crew

A Yankee ship and a Yankee crew,
Tally hi ho! You know!
O'er the bright blue waves like a sea-bird flew,
Singing hey! Aloft and alow!
Her sails are spread to the fairy breeze,
The spray sparkling as thrown from her prow;
Her flag is the proudest that floats on the seas,
Her way homeward she's steering now.

Chorus:

A Yankee ship and a Yankee crew,
Tally hi ho! You know!
With hearts aboard both gallant and true;
The same aloft and alow.

The blackened sky and the whistling wind
Foretell the approach of a gale.
And home and its joy flit over each mind;
Husbands, lovers on deck there asail—
A Yankee ship and a Yankee crew;
Tally hi ho! You know!
Distress is the word, God speed them through—
Bear a hand aloft and alow.—*Cho.*

A Yankee ship and a Yankee crew,
Tally hi ho! You know!
Freedom defends the land where it grew;
We're free aloft and alow!
Bearing down is a ship in regal pride,
Defiance floating at each masthead;
She's wrecked, and the one bears that floats alongside,
The Stars and the Stripes that's to victory wed.—*Cho.*

A Yankee ship and a Yankee crew,
Tally hi ho! You know!
Ne'er strikes to a foe while the sky is blue,
Or tars are aloft or alow.—*Cho.*
(*Transcript from Lewis W. Knowles, New York.*)

Compadre Clifford L. Palmer, 144 South Knox St., Albany, N. Y., would like to be put on the track of the following lines—he can't remember the title of the song:

It was midnight on the ocean,
Not a trolley car in sight.
The skipper hailed a taxicab
And rode all day that night.

Compadre A. Rubin, 366 Snediker Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y., is looking for the following ballad—doesn't know the title—

Green to green and red to red,
Mean perfect safety—go ahead.

Compadre Jack Finley, of Du Noir, Wyo., would like to be put on the trail of "The Little Old Sod Shanty on the Plain." Will some brother loosen up and oblige Br'er Jack?

Compadre John P. Cuero, of Socorro, N. M., would like to get the complete poem of a lumberjack song containing the line, "For we've naught to fear from those West Virginia snakes." New one on me.

Away Off in the West

There's a country famed in story,
As I've often times been told;
'Tis a land of mighty rivers
Running over sands of gold,
The abode of peace and plenty,
And with quietness 'tis blest.
But this country that's so famous,
Is away off in the west.

Chorus:

'Tis away off in the west,
'Tis away off in the west.
Oh, I fear we ne'er shall find it,
'Tis so far off in the west.

Once a man from Androscoggin
Or some outlandish place,
With a view to find this country
To the westward set his face,
He was weary at Chicago,
So he sat him down to rest;
But 'twas only there the center,
Not the fabled golden west.—*Cho.*

Then he crossed the rolling prairies,
Stretching onward like the sea.
"I am bound to find this country
If there's such a one," said he.
So he swam the Mississippi,
And upon Missouri's breast
He explored the wilds of Kansas
For this country in the west.—*Cho.*

Climbing o'er the Rocky Mountains,
On he kept his weary way
Till the broad Pacific's waters
Right before his vision lay.
So he sat him down and pondered;
But for him there was no rest.
" 'Tis an island surely," said he,
"This fair country in the west."—*Cho.*

Then a vessel quick he builded,
And the shore he left behind,
Sailing on with eager longing
Still this happy isle to find.
After many days one morning
He beheld the wished-for land,
Steering through the foaming breakers
Quickly reached the golden strand.—*Cho.*

From his gallant bark he landed,
Wading through the curling foam
With his eyes wide-oped with wonder—
For he found himself at home!
Thus he learned that one forever
May go on and never rest,
Seeking for this golden country
For 'tis always farther west.—*Cho.*
(*Transcript from Mrs. Alice Hiner, Garnett, Kan.*)

Compadre Donald McNicol, of 233 Broadway, New York, used to hear a song by the name of "On the Opeongo," sung by the lumberjacks up in Ontario some twenty-five years ago. Opeongo is the name of a river up in that country on which a great deal of lumbering was done a half-century ago. Perhaps some of you fellows can reach back that far. Come right in.

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Just a little word in yer ears, my hearties. When I give the name and address of a sitter-in at the Camp-Fire who wants some first-hand information about some song, I do it so that you can send him the stuff direct and thus get it into his hands before we can publish it. But, compadres, that doesn't mean that you are to leave me off your list. I'll want the verses for publication for others whose memories may be refreshed by reading the inquiry.

Mrs. N. Marseilles of New Orleans, for instance, writes me a letter that she received copies of "The Rose of Tralee" from all parts of the country, and she wants me to thank all of you for your kindness. By good luck just one brother sent a copy to me, and here it is. Thank Compadre John J. Kenney, 167 Sands St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Don't overlook the modest editor, who is as keen on these old songs as an inquirer.

The Rose of Tralee

The pale moon was rising behind the dark mountain,
And the sun was declining beneath the blue sea
When I strolled with my loved one to the pure crystal fountain
That stands in the beautiful Vale of Tralee.

Chorus:

She was lovely and fair as the rose in the Summer;
But it was not her beauty alone that won me.
Oh, no! 'Twas the truth in her eyes ever beaming
That made me love Mary, my Rose of Tralee.

The cool shades of evening their mantles were spreading
With Mary all smiling and listening to me,
And the moon o'er the valley her pale rays was shedding,
When I won the heart of my Rose of Tralee.—*Cho.*

'Tis now we are married and live quite contented—
Mary my wife and our sweet children three—
Since that day I first won her I ne'er have repented
Wedding my sweetheart, the Rose of Tralee.—*Cho.*

Many thanks to Compadre William L. Alden of Albany, N. Y., for "Sailing Orders," a mighty fine bit of salt-water verse which appears herewith. It's a pity that so much of this good stuff gets around without the author's name. We will appreciate any information bearing on this point from any of our readers in reference to all anonymous material.

Sailing Orders

If you're weary of the office
And your step has lost its snap,
If you're looking for a life that fits
A big, two-fisted chap—
If you want to go a-roving
All this jolly old world around
Come a-running, running, buddy,
When the bugle starts to sound!

For we've got our sailing orders,
And there's joy in all our hearts—
Oh, we're dropping down the river
And it's hey for foreign parts!
It's hey for Guam and Haiti
And the beach at Wai-ki-ki!
The marines have got their orders,
And they're putting out to sea.

They're cheering from the ferries,
And they're waving from the shore;
The dull old life's behind us
And the new life lies before;
We're off to make talk "howdy"
With the Moro and Chinee—
The marines have got their orders
And they're putting out to sea.

Our appreciative thanks to General Secretary Henry P. Weston, of the Cooperative Holidays Association, Manchester, England, for the association song books.

Send your old songs, or requests for 'em, to ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 745 Riverside Drive, New York. Do not send questions to this magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

JUNE 10TH ISSUE

Besides the **four complete novelettes** mentioned on the second page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

TAPU — *J. B. Newsom*
The Voice from the Beyond.

SKOOKUM JIM AND THE GOLDEN RULE — *John Joseph*
Murder and the finger of suspicion.

NEWS FROM GOD'S COUNTRY — *Everett Saunders and Edison Fowler*
Miner methods.

HURRICANE WILLIAMS' VENGEANCE **A Four-Part Story Part II** — *Gordon Young*
Castaways by choice.

NOT A GENTLEMAN'S JOB — *Magda Leigh*
A white-collar sailor and a roughneck crew.

WHERE THE TRAIL ENDED — *Clements Ripley*
A well-timed sacrifice.

A ROYAL REVOLT — *F. St. Mars*
Rulers of a savage kingdom.

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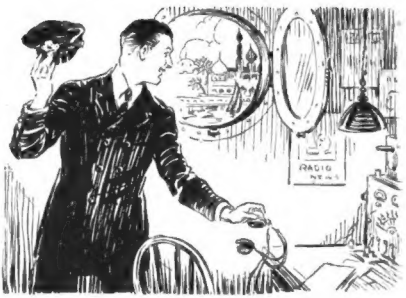
A Fascinating Big-Pay Field That You Can Put Your Heart Into

NO MATTER whether you wish to visit every nook and corner of the world or whether you have no desire to travel—here is a fascinating field that offers you big pay in either case. Both on land and on sea splendid opportunities are calling you. And now, through our wonderful Five-Step Method, you can quickly and easily learn Radio at home in your spare time and become a licensed operator. A fascinating big-pay field that you can put your heart into is eagerly awaiting your services. Read how you can step into the wonderful future it holds for you!



Wonderful "Five-Step" Method Makes Radio Amazingly Easy To Learn

From every branch of Radio comes the call for operators! From the sea comes the call of the United States Merchant Marine, that ply over every ocean. Private steamship lines whose ships reach India, Norway, Africa, and ports in every part of the world also sound the call. Big opportunities are offered with a chance to see the world as an officer with luxurious quarters and good pay. As Radio operator all your expenses are paid right from the start so that you have a most unusual opportunity to save money.

From the land, too, comes the call of the new forces that are formed to make Radio the greatest means of communication in existence. The Radio Corporation of America with authorized capitalization of $25,000,000 capital is establishing land stations in every section. In every field, agriculture, finance, politics, etc., Radio is being adopted as an essential department of business. And now, as never before, is *your* big lifetime opportunity to get in on the wonderful future this fascinating field holds for you. Through our wonderful new method you can *qualify* in a few short months. Right in your own home five wonderful inventions take you quickly and easily through the five easy steps between you and one of the splendid Radio positions waiting for you.

STEP No. 1—The LEARNER'S TRANSMITTER—makes learning the code a delightful pastime.

STEP No. 2—The LEARNER'S RECEIVER—teaches you the most difficult part of Radio—receiving, in almost "no time."

STEP No. 3—The NAROLA RADIO PARTS OUTFIT—you assemble your own set.

STEP No. 4—The wonderful NATROMETER—sends 600 different combinations of messages automatically at speeds varying from 5 to 130 words a minute smoothly, noiselessly, and without the slightest bit of "choppiness."

STEP No. 5—National Radio RECEIVING SET—enables you to "listen in" on the world and gives you the practical experience of actually taking messages "out of the air."

These five amazing inventions are furnished to the student with our course. With them learning becomes a fascinating game. And you progress so rapidly that you are a qualified operator almost before you realize it.

Just One of Hundreds of Letters

Lawrence Waring, one of our graduates of Norfolk, Va., says: "There is no other profession today offering the opportunity to travel and see the world and at the same time paying a good salary as Radio Telegraphy. My board, of course, costs me nothing. The work is not hard; in fact, it is the most interesting work I've ever been in. We are sailing for Verdo, Norway, and will come back by way of Scotland and France. I will get a chance to see the land of the Midnight Sun."

Cash In On The World's Expansion

If you have kept pace with the world you know why Radio offers you a future which nothing else can. You know that this amazing field has only taken one step compared to the enormous strides that are yet to come. You can cash in now on this expansion. You can easily and quickly qualify for the splendid inducements it offers.

The National Radio Institute is today the oldest and largest Radio school in America teaching Radio by mail. It is officially recognized by the U. S. Department of Commerce, its diploma is given official credit. And now through a wonderful new short-cut course and the five wonderful inventions you can qualify through the National Radio Institute in a short period for a fine Radio position.

Special Opportunity Now Open

The urgent need for Radio experts and the calls which come to us for our students prompt us to make a special offer open to new students for a limited time. Through this special offer your enrollment will be accepted at a special rate, and you will receive, without extra cost, our new course in Radio.

Mail Coupon for Free Book

It costs you nothing to get our illustrated booklet, "How to Learn Radio at Home." Let us tell you more fully about our Five-Step Method which has qualified so many hundreds of our students for the splendid profession of Radio. Let us tell you how you can travel all over the world with easy, interesting work and good pay. Or, if you wish, you can accept one of the big Radio positions on land which are now urgently in need of your services. Mail coupon Today for this booklet and for full facts about our special short-time offer. Fill out the coupon now and send it to us at once!

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Rush This Special Coupon

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Send me your FREE Book, "How to Learn Radio at Home," with full particulars about the opportunities in Radio and how you will quickly train me in my spare time at home to become a certified Radio-trician. Also, tell me how your Free Employment Service will help me to a position and particulars of your Special Short-Time Offer.

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City.....State.....

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PUPPETS
in the hands of Cesare Borgia

WHEN Cesare Borgia discovered that the daughter of his enemy loved one of his men, he decided to use them. And he did it with such skill that no one knew that through them he manipulated the surrender of the fortress San Leo—no one but those who read this fascinating tale in EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE for May. Rafael Sabatini, the famous satirist, has written it. You will be fascinated by the magician who knew that "serpents stewed in wine and eaten would cure a leper by conferring upon him the faculty of changing his skin." You will appreciate the diabolic cleverness of the great Cesare Borgia.

Don't fail to read "The Urbinian" by Rafael Sabatini

RAFAEL SABATINI, *author of "The Urbinian," in* EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE *for May, is well known as the author of the popular books, "Captain Blood" and "Scaramouche."*

Everybody's Magazine

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